One Hundred and Seventy three

SERMONS

On Several

SUBJECTS

AND

OCCASIONS.

In TWO VOLUMES.

K

By *SAMUEL CLARKE*, D. D.
Late Rector of St. *James*'s, *Westminster*.

Published from the AUTHOR's *Manuscript*,
By JOHN CLARKE, D.D. Dean of *Sarum*.

VOL. I.

With A PREFACE, giving some Account of the LIFE, WRITINGS, and CHARACTER of the AUTHOR:
By *BENJAMIN*, Lord Bishop of *Salisbury*.

DUBLIN:
Printed by S. POWELL,
For STEARNE BROCK at the Corner of *Sycomore-Alley*
in *Dame-Street*, Bookseller, M, DCC, XXXIV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

QUEEN.

MADAM,

I Beg leave, in the moſt humble manner, to preſent to Your MAJESTY, a Body of Sermons, not unworthy, I truſt, of Your Royal Countenance and Protection.

The near Relation in which the Author of Them ſtood to Me, makes it almoſt impoſſible for Me to know How to ſpeak, upon this occaſion, either of Him, or of His Writings.

I am

I AM ſenſible, It would ill become Me to mix my private Griefs with the Duty I am now performing to his Memory, and much worſe, to pretend to paſs a Judgment upon his Works, for which I may juſtly be thought to have too defective a Capacity, and too tender a Partiality. They will All be ſoon before the World, to ſpeak for Themſelves: And then, the Character which They deſerve, will certainly attend upon Them, with a much better Grace, from the Conſent of the Learned, the Judicious, and the Diſintereſted Part of Mankind.

BUT in one Point I muſt be allowed to be the moſt proper Judge: And to mention it will juſtify Me in the preſent Addreſs to Your MAJESTY: That had Dr. *Clarke* himſelf been to direct, To Whom theſe Diſcourſes of His ſhould be inſcribed; He would have named no Other, than that QUEEN, in whoſe Favour He himſelf had lived: from whoſe Patronage He had enjoyed ſo much Honour; and of whoſe high Accompliſhments He had conceived ſo great an Opinion.

UPON theſe Subjects, MADAM, I have a Right to ſpeak; And it would indeed be Injuſtice to his Memory for Me to be ſilent, who was, through ſo many Years, a Witneſs to the Sentiments he expreſs'd upon Them. He would often be ſpeaking of Them, not ſo much with the Pleaſure of a Perſon highly diſtinguiſh'd by the frequent Attendances upon Your MAJESTY, to which He was admitted; as with the Satisfaction of a true Philoſophical and well-diſpoſed Mind, delighted with the Sight and Proſpect of Something of Univerſal Good Influence.

COMPLIMENT and Courtlineſs towards the Appearances of Grandeur; an Undue Elevation of Heart upon the Uncommon Share of Favour He enjoyed; or a Selfiſh Application of Soul to make it ſubſervient to his own Gain or Advancement: Theſe were far removed from the Turn of his Mind; and never once appeared either in his Diſcourſe, or in his Behaviour. The Satisfaction which uſed to ſhew itſelf

ſelf in Him, was Manly and Chriſtian: and the Perſonal Honour done to Himſelf was the Leaſt part of it. If indeed, He had not entertain'd and expreſs'd a due Senſe of Your MAJESTY's particular Regard to Himſelf; He had been Unworthy of it: But This was not the Agreeable part of the Subject to Him.

YOUR uncommon Capacity, and Extenſive Underſtanding; Your Quickneſs in apprehending the Force of Evidence, and Your Sagacity in diſcovering the Failures in the moſt plauſible Pretences to it; Your Impartial Regard to Truth, and Conſtant Enquiry after it; Your Univerſal Charity and Tenderneſs to All, amidſt our Various and Contradictory Opinions; Your Generous Concern for Religious and Civil Liberty, and Abhorrence of Every Sort and Every Degree of Perſecution and Oppreſſion; Your Love of the Happineſs of Mankind in General, and Your Paſſion for the Intereſts of this Nation in particular:--- Theſe were the Topicks, upon which He would with pleaſure enlarge. From Theſe He preſaged great Good to Religion itſelf; and Happineſs to All who ſhould live within the Influence of ſo many Excellencies placed in ſo Exalted a Station.

AND as Theſe Expreſſions of Regard to Your High Accompliſhments, are the Teſtimony of a Perſon, who formed his Judgment upon Experience; and a Teſtimony often given in private, where He could have no Temptation either to diſguiſe his Real Thoughts, or to profeſs any Other; it is impoſſible that Flattery can be ſuppoſed to have had any part in Them. They were the Sentiments of his Heart: And from the Remembrance of Them I receive this ſatisfaction, That, in what I am now doing, I have His Voice and Concurrence; and that, as Theſe Diſcourſes are His, ſo the Dedication of Them to Your MAJESTY may, in no improper ſenſe, be ſaid to be His alſo.

NAY, if I may be permitted to go a little farther, I will add That, if Dr. *Clarke* himſelf were to chuſe, under what Character He would be deſcribed and known to Poſterity, He would wiſh That from other Points it might riſe at laſt into

This, That whilſt He lived He was honoured, with the frequent Converſations of a QUEEN, as much diſtinguiſhed by Her Capacity and Taſte of Good ſenſe, as by Her Excellent Behaviour in Every Relation of Life.

PERMIT therefore, MADAM, his Works now to reſt under the ſame Patronage, which He himſelf once enjoyed. Suffer theſe Remains of His to be conſecrated to that Great Perſon who eſteem'd and cheriſh'd their Author; and to ſhelter Themſelves under that Royal Name which was the Glory of His laſt Years.

AND permit Me, MADAM, at the ſame time to acknowledge, with all the Sentiments of a Grateful Heart, the Many Expreſſions of Your Regard to His Memory, as well as Your Generous Goodneſs and Beneficence to Myſelf, ſince his death: and to profeſs Myſelf, with all poſſible Reſpect and Duty,

MADAM,

Your MAJESTY's

Moſt Devoted and

Moſt Humble Servant,

Catharine Clarke.

THE

PREFACE,

Giving ſome Account of the LIFE, WRITINGS, *and* CHARACTER *of the* AUTHOR.

DR. *SAMUEL CLARKE* was born at *Norwich*, *Oct.* 11. *A.D.* 1675. His Father was *Edward Clarke*, Eſq; Alderman of That City, and One of the Repreſentatives of It, in Parliament, for ſeveral Years: A Perſon of an Excellent Natural Capacity, and of an untainted Reputation for Probity and all Virtue. His Mother was *Hannah*, the Daughter of Mr. *Samuel Parmenter*, Merchant, of the ſame City. He received the firſt Rudiments of Learning in the Free-ſchool at *Norwich*, from the Reverend Mr. *Burton*, under whoſe Care He made a very Uncommon Proficiency in the Learned Languages. In the Year 1691, He was removed to *Cambridge*, and placed at *Caius College*, under the Tuition of Mr. *Ellis*, afterwards Sir *John Ellis*. And here, His Impatient Thirſt after True Knowledge, and his Great Capacity both for diſcovering and improving it, preſently began to ſhew Themſelves.

THE Philoſophy of *Des Cartes* was then the *Eſtabliſhed Philoſophy* of that *Univerſity*; and the Syſtem of Nature hardly allowed to be explained any otherwiſe than by *His* Principles: Which, at beſt, were evidently no more than the Inventions of a very Ingenious and Luxuriant Fancy; having no Foundation in the Reality of Things, nor any Correſpondency to the Certainty of Facts. His *Tutor* himſelf, though

a Learned Man, and for ever to be honoured for his Conſcientious Care of All under Him, was a Zealot for this Philoſophy; and as He was Moſt Diligent in reading to his Pupils, without doubt gave Them the moſt favourable Impreſſions of what He had ſo cloſely embraced Himſelf; and but little Encouragement to ſtrike out Any Light in another way of thinking. The Great Sir *Iſaac Newton* had indeed then publiſhed his *Principia*. But this Book was but for The Few: both the Manner and Matter of it placing it out of the Reach of the Generality even of Learned Readers; and ſtrong Prejudice, in favour of what had been received, working againſt It. But neither the Difficulty of the Task, nor the Reſpect He paid to the Director of his Studies; nor the Warmth and Prejudice of All around Him, had any Effect upon his Mind. Not at all ſatisfied, therefore, with *Hypotheſes* arbitrarily adapted to Appearances; He ſet himſelf immediately to the Study of what was Real and Subſtantial: And in This Study He made ſuch uncommon Advances, that He was preſently Maſter of the Chief parts of the *Newtonian Philoſophy*; and in order to his Firſt *Degree*, performed a Publick Exerciſe in the Schools, upon a *Queſtion* taken from thence, which ſurprized the Whole Audience, both for the Accuracy of Knowledge, and Clearneſs of Expreſſion, that appeared through the Whole. Such an Example could not but be of great uſe, to animate All around Him. But He was not content with the Service He could do to *True Philoſophy*, by his Example only.

As ſoon as He had taken that firſt *Degree*, Young as He was, He made an Effort for the Service of the Students, which ought not to be forgotten. The Syſtem of *Natural Philoſophy* then generally taught in the *Univerſity*, was that written by Monſ. *Rohault*; entirely founded on the *Carteſian* Principles; and very ill tranſlated into *Latin*. He juſtly thought that Philoſophical Notions might be expreſs'd in pure *Latin*: And if He had gone no farther than This. He would have merited of All Thoſe who were to draw their Knowledge out of that Book. But His Aim was much higher than the making a Better Tranſlation of it. He reſolved to add to It ſuch Notes, as might lead the Young Men inſenſibly, and by degrees, to Other and Truer Notions than what could be found there. And this certainly, was a More Prudent Method of introducing Truth unknown before, than to attempt to throw aſide this Treatiſe entirely, and write a New one inſtead of it. The Succeſs anſwered exceedingly well to His Hopes: And He may juſtly be ſtiled a Great Benefactor to the *Univerſity*, in this Attempt. For, by this Means, the True Philoſophy has without any Noiſe prevailed: and to this Day, His *Tranſlation* of *Rohault* is, generally ſpeaking, the Standing Text for *Lectures*; and His *Notes*, the firſt Direction to Thoſe who are willing to receive the Reality and Truth of Things in the place of Invention and Romance. And thus before He was much above Twenty Years old, He furniſhed the Students with a *Syſtem* of Knowledge, which has been ever ſince, and ſtill continues to be, a Publick Benefit to All who have the happineſs of a Liberal and Learned Education in that *Univerſity*.

Immediately after this, His Thoughts were turned to *Divinity*; which he propoſed to make the peculiar Study and Profeſſion of his Life: For the proſecution of which Deſign He ſoon met with a very favourable Opportunity. Dr. *John Moore*, then Lord Biſhop of *Norwich*,

wich, the greateſt Patron of Learning and of Learned Men, that this Age has produced, had already fixed his Eyes upon Mr. *Clarke*, as a Young Man, of a Genius much exalted above the Common rank, and promiſing Great Things to the World in his riper Years. He reſolved to make him his *Chaplain*, as ſoon as he ſhould be Old Enough to take Orders. And when he did ſo, at the ſame time he received him into his Familiarity and Friendſhip, to ſuch a remarkable degree, that He lived for near twelve Years in that Station, with All the decent Freedoms of a Brother and an Equal rather than an Inferior. The whole Family counted Themſelves happy in him, as an Intimate Friend. The Biſhop's Value for him increaſed every day, as his Knowledge of him increaſed. There was no mark of Confidence, as well as Eſteem, which that Prelate did not ſhew him, as long as he lived: And at his death, the higheſt Mark of Confidence he could give him, was the Leaving all the the Concerns of his Family ſolely in his hands; a Truſt, which he executed with the moſt faithful Exactneſs, and to the Entire Satisfaction of every Perſon concerned. To return,

His firſt Studies, in order to fit himſelf for the Office he propoſed to undertake, were, The *Old Teſtament* in the Original *Hebrew*; The *New* in its Original *Greek*; and the *primitive* Chriſtian Writers. The *Firſt* of theſe he then read with that Exactneſs of Judgment, which very Few have ſhewn after a much longer Application; and which furniſhed him with Many Obſervations written at that time with his own hand in the *Margin*, relating to the Miſtakes of the common *Tranſlation* of it. The *New Teſtament* he read with a true Critical Accuracy: And, with great Care, purſued his Deſign farther, through the Writers of the Earlieſt Ages, in order to diſcover, if poſſible, the Genuine Sentiments and Cuſtoms of Antiquity; as well as to ſupport the Authority and True Interpretation of the ſacred Books. The Reſult of all this Application appeared ſo early as the Year 1699, in *Two Treatiſes*. The one was deſigned for the promoting of the Practice of Religion, under the Title of *Three Practical Eſſays* upon *Baptiſm*, *Confirmation*, and *Repentance*. The other, without his Name, was entitled, *Some Reflections* on (a Book call'd) *Amyntor*, relating to the *primitive Fathers*, and the *Canon* of the *New Teſtament*. I mention them here, not to put them upon the level with his Other Performances; but only as having upon them the plain Marks of a Chriſtian Frame of mind; and as Proofs of his Knowledge in the Writings of thoſe Early Ages, even at his firſt ſetting out into the World.

From theſe Attempts, He procceded, without Intermiſſion, to Others of ſtill greater Importance: making Uſe of the Leiſure and Freedom he enjoyed in his Patron's Family, and of One of the Nobleſt Private Collections of Books which ever appeared in *England*, for the Purpoſe he had chiefly in his Eye; the Underſtanding the Phraſeology of the *Holy Scriptures*, and the Explaining the Meaning of them ſo, as to make them uſeful to All who are concerned in them. The firſt *Eſſay*, in this Deſign, was His *Paraphraſe* upon St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, publiſhed in the Year 1701: and ſoon followed by *Paraphaſes* upon the *Goſpels* of St. *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*. Theſe were written with a manly plainneſs and perſpicuity; and accompanied with a very few ſhort *Notes*, where Any Critical Explication was neceſſary. Of how great benefit theſe have been, and always will be, to thoſe *Engliſh* Readers, who have Senſe and Goodneſs e-

nough to be pleaſed with a juſt Repreſentation of the True Meaning of what is recorded in the Goſpel; I need not ſay. Experience has already ſaid enough of the Uſefulneſs of ſuch a Manner of Interpretation, from ſo maſterly an Hand. It were highly to be wiſhed that he had purſued his Original Deſign, and completed the Work upon the Whole *New Teſtament:* in many Books of which, the Intricate *Connexion* of the Parts; the ſeeming Perplexity of the *Argument*; and the *Obſcurity* of the *Stile* at this diſtance of Time, particularly call'd for the Aſſiſtance of ſo Critical an Underſtanding, capable of finding out the True Ideas annexed to the old Words; and of diſcovering the hidden Force of Thoſe Reaſonings, which would otherwiſe eſcape the view of Common Readers. He had indeed, actually begun his *Paraphraſe* upon the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*, immediately after the Others were publiſhed; and had certainly propoſed to himſelf to go through All the remaining Books. But ſomething accidental interrupted the Execution: and it is now only to be lamented that Any thing firſt diverted him from it; or that he did not afterwards prevail upon himſelf to reſume and compleat ſo Excellent a Work; which his Friends often preſſed upon him; and to which he would ſometimes anſwer, That it was made leſs neceſſary by the Labours of ſeveral Worthy and Learned Perſons, ſince the appearance of his Work upon the *Four Goſpels*.

BISHOP *Moore*, who was every day confirmed in the high Opinion of his Superior Talents, and Excellent Qualifications, very juſtly thought that there was No place ſo deſerving of ſuch a perſon, and ſo fit for Such Abilities to exert themſelves in, for the Good of Mankind, as the *Metropolis* of the Kingdom: And it very ſoon became his Settled Reſolution to make uſe of all his Intereſt, which at that time was very conſiderable amongſt the Greateſt Men of the Nation, in order to fix him in the moſt remarkable Scene of Action. But, in the mean while, he gave him the Rectory of *Drayton* near *Norwich*, and procured for him a *Pariſh* in that *City*; both together of very inconſiderable value: and theſe he ſerved himſelf in the Seaſon, when the *Biſhop* reſided at *Norwich*. His preaching at firſt was without Notes; and ſo continued till he was *Rector* of St. *James's*; A Method, in which he was peculiarly happy; not by truſting to his Memory entirely, and ſpeaking a Sermon compoſed before, in which ſome have excelled; nor by heating himſelf gradually into Any ſort of Paſſion, to which *Others* have owed all their Fluency of Language; but by a Certain Strength and Coolneſs of Head, which could not eaſily be ſurprized or deceived; and a Certain Faculty of Expreſſion, which was hardly ever at a loſs for plain and proper words.

IN the Year 1704. He was called forth to an Office worthy of ſuch an Underſtanding. It was to preach Mr. *Boyle*'s Lecture, founded by that Honourable Gentleman, to aſſert and vindicate the Great Fundamentals of Natural and Revealed Religion. This was a Province, for which if ever Any one was peculiarly fitted by Natural Parts, and Learning; he was the Man. And he executed this Truſt in ſuch a Manner, that he at once ſurprized, and inſtructed, his moſt Underſtanding Hearers. He exceeded the Expectations, even of thoſe who knew Him enough to expect Great Things from him:

and

and laid the Foundations of True Religion too deep and ſtrong to be ſhaken either by the Superſtition of Some, or the Infidelity of Others. The Subject of his Diſcourſes was, The Exiſtence of a GOD, or of a Being of All poſſible Perfections. And in the Demonſtration of this, he choſe particularly to conſider the Arguings of *Spinoza* and *Hobbes*, the moſt plauſible Patrons of the Syſtem of *Fate* and *Neceſſity*; a *Syſtem*, which by deſtroying All true Freedom of Action in Any Intelligent Being, at the ſame time deſtroys All that can be ſtiled Virtue, or Praiſe-worthy. This being a *Subject*, into which all the Subtilties and Querks of Metaphyſics had entred, and thrown their uſual Obſcurity and Intricacy; the Difficulty lay in clearing away this Rubbiſh of Confuſion; in introducing a Language that could be underſtood; in clothing the cleareſt Ideas in this plain and manly Language; and in concluding Nothing, but from ſuch Evidence as amounts to *Demonſtration*. And thus it was that the Maſterly hand appeared. He began with Self-evident *Propoſitions*. From them he advanced to ſuch as received their Proof from the Former. In theſe he took no Step till he had ſecured the Way before him. Throughout the Whole, no Word is uſed, but what is Intelligible to All who are at all verſed in ſuch *Subjects*, and what expreſſes the Clear Idea in the Mind of him who makes uſe of it: and All is one Regular Building, erected upon an Unmoveable Foundation; and riſing up, from One Stage to Another, with equal Strength and Dignity.

HIS Labours ſucceeded ſo well in this Great Attempt, that he was appointed to preach again, the next Year. And here he went on with the ſame Method, Clearneſs, and Strength, to deduce from What he had before proved, and to ſtrengthen with all proper Arguments, *The Evidences of* Natural *and* Revealed *Religion*. In theſe Diſcourſes he laid the Foundations of Morality deep, in the mutual Relations of Things and Perſons, one to another; in the Unalterable Fitneſs of ſome Actions, and the Unfitneſs of others; and in the Will of the Great Creator of All things, evident from his making Man capable of ſeeing theſe Relations, and this Fitneſs; of judging concerning them; and of acting agreeably to that Judgment. He then proceeded to demonſtrate the Chriſtian Religion to be worthy of God, from the *Internal* Evidence, taken from the perfect Agreeableneſs of Its Main Deſign to the Light of Nature; and to All the Moral Obligations of Eternal Reaſon: without which Agreeableneſs, All the Arguments in the World could never conclude in its favour: And, after this, to prove It to be actually recommended to the World by GOD, from All the *External* Evidence, of Prophecy going before it, and Miraculous Works performed expreſly for the honour and propagation of it. All which He executed with ſuch Maſterly Senſe, and perſpicuity of Expreſſion, as recommended both the Preacher and the Subject to All who heard Him. Theſe two Courſes of *Sermons* were ſoon printed in Two Continued *Treatiſes*: which was thought to be the moſt uſeful Way of publiſhing them to the World. Several *Editions* of them have already been printed; in every One of which the *Author* did not ſcruple to make ſuch Alterations and Additions, as ſeemed to Him neceſſary either for the preventing any Miſtakes, or the farther Clearing up the Important Subjects of Them. I ſhall ſay nothing farther

farther about them, but that Every Chriſtian in *this* Country, in which they firſt ſaw the Light, ought to eſteem them as *His Treaſure*; as they contain the True Strength not only of *Natural*, but of *Revealed* Religion: Which, if ever it be removed from ſuch a Foundation; or ſeparated from ſuch an Alliance with Reaſon and Uncorrupted Nature, will not long ſubſiſt in the Belief of Underſtanding Perſons, after ſuch a ſeparation. And therefore, *What God hath joined together, let no Man put aſunder.*

SOON after the preaching of theſe *Sermons*, Biſhop *Moore* found an Opportunity of bringing him to Town; and procured for him, by his Intereſt, the Rectory of St. *Bennet's Paul's-Wharf*. Many in that Pariſh ſtill remember how Inſtructive and Acceptable his Preaching was to All in it: And he himſelf never forgot, but frequently with pleaſure recounted the very particular Civilities he received from the *Gentlemen* of *Doctors Commons*, who made the moſt conſiderable Part of his Audience.

ABOUT this time the Learned Mr. *Dodwell* publiſhed a very remarkable Diſcourſe; in which, in order to exalt the Powers and Dignity of the *Prieſthood*, in that *One Communion*, which he imagined to be the *Peculium* of GOD, and to which he had joined himſelf, he endeavoured to prove, with his uſual perplexity of Learning, that the Doctrine of the Soul's *Natural Mortality* was the True and Original Doctrine; and that *Immortality* was only a *Baptiſm* conferred upon the Soul, by the Gift of GOD, thro' the hands of One Sett of regularly-ordained Clergy. The Miſchievous tendency of theſe Doctrines, thus blended together, as it was back'd by the Great Name of the Author in the *Learned* World, made it more neceſſary that an Anſwer ſhould be given to What might from Another hand perhaps have been received as a Deſign'd Banter and Ridicule both upon Natural and Inſtituted Religion. Mr. *Clarke* was thought the moſt proper Perſon for this Work. And he did it in ſo excellent a Manner, both with regard to the *Philoſophical* part, and to the Opinions of ſome of the *Primitive Writers*, upon Whom theſe Doctrines were fixed; that It gave Univerſal Satisfaction. Nor did he ſtop here. For, a very Ingenious *Gentleman*, having laid hold on this favourable opportunity of coming into this Controverſy, as a Second to Mr. *Dodwell*, went much farther into the *Philoſophy* of the Diſpute; and indeed ſeemed to produce All that could plauſibly be ſaid againſt the *Immateriality* of the *Soul*, as well as the *Liberty* of *Human Actions*. This enlarged the Scene of the *Diſpute*: into which Mr. *Clarke* enter'd, and wrote with ſuch a Spirit of Clearneſs, and Demonſtration, as at once ſhewed him greatly ſuperior to his Adverſaries in *Metaphyſical* and *Phyſical* Knowledge; and made Every Intelligent Reader rejoice that ſuch an Incident had happen'd, to provoke and extort from him that Plenty of ſtrong Reaſoning, and Perſpicuity of Expreſſion, which were indeed very much wanted upon this intricate and obſcure Subject. And I am perſuaded that, as what he has writ in this Controverſy, comprehends the Little that the Antients had ſaid well; and adds ſtill more Evidence than ever clearly appeared before; and all in Words that have a Meaning to them: It will remain the Standard of Good Senſe on that ſide of the

the Queſtion on which he ſpent ſo many of his Thoughts, as upon One of his Favourite-Points.

ABOUT this time, his Worthy Patron brought him to *Court*, and procured him to be made One of the *Chaplains* in *Ordinary* to Queen *ANNE*; to whoſe greater Favour his own Excellent Qualifications recommended him ſo ſoon and ſo powerfully, that, upon the Vacancy of St. *James*'s *Weſtminſter*, ſhe immediately conſented to the Requeſt of the *Biſhop*, and preſented him to that *Rectory*. In this Station, which placed him in the obſervation of Many of the *Nobleſt* part of our World, How he conducted himſelf for above *Twenty Years*; What an Undiſturbed Unanimity there was between him, and all his Pariſhioners, thro' the whole Time; What his Preaching, and what his Converſation were; how inſtructive *Both*, and how acceptable, to All of every Sort and Party into which we are diſtinguiſhed; Let *Them* teſtify who were Eye-Witneſſes and Ear-Witneſſes to them: who all equally rejoiced in his Diſcourſes and in his Preſence whilſt he was alive; and equally lamented their own Loſs, at his Death. As ſoon as he was ſettled in this Pariſh, he left off his former Way of preaching without the aſſiſtance of Notes; and made it one of his chief Studies to compoſe, and write down, as accurate *Sermons* as he could. Not, as I believe, becauſe he could not proceed in the former Method, with a Copiouſneſs of Good Senſe and Clear Expreſſion, which the Nobleſt Audience might with pleaſure have attended to; but chiefly, becauſe from that Time it became his Reſolution to prepare his Sermons in ſuch a Manner, that they might hereafter be as Uſeful from the *Preſs*, as he wiſhed them then to be from the *Pulpit*.

UPON his Advancement to ſuch a Station, it was eſteemed a Piece of Decency for him to take the *Degree* of *Doctor* in *Divinity*, for which he was now of ſufficient Standing in the *Univerſity*. For this purpoſe, he went down to *Cambridge*, and propoſed his two Queſtions; and performed a long *publick Exerciſe* upon them; the Memory of which will, I believe, remain, and be delivered down from one Succeſſion of the *Learned* in that Univerſity to Another. The Queſtions were theſe:

1. *Nullum Fidei Chriſtianæ Dogma, in S. Scripturis traditum, eſt Rectæ Rationi diſſentaneum.*

2. *Sine Actionum humanarum Libertate nulla poteſt eſſe Religio.*

1. *No Article of the Chriſtian Faith, delivered in the Holy Scriptures, is Diſagreeable to Right Reaſon.*

2. *Without the Liberty of Human Actions there can be no Religion.* Two *Queſtions*, worthy of ſuch a Divine and ſuch a Philoſopher, to propoſe for *Publick Debate?*

THE *Royal Profeſſor* of Divinity, Dr. *James*, who was a Learned, Ready, and very Acute Diſputer, exerted himſelf, beyond what was his Common Practice, in order to oppoſe and try him to the Utmoſt. By the help of a Great Memory, and Fluency of Words, and a certain Knack in the Art of Diſputing, he firſt went into a long *Examination* of Dr. *Clarke*'s *Theſis*, (which was an Elaborate Diſcourſe upon the *Former* of theſe two *Queſtions*,) ſifting Every part of it with the ſtricteſt Nicety; and afterwards, preſs'd him with

all the Force of *Syllogiſm*, in its various Forms, thro' the Courſe of the *Diſputation*. Here was an *Adverſary* worthy of ſuch a Reſpondent. To the *former* Dr. *Clarke* made an *Extempore* Reply, in a continued Diſcourſe for near half an hour: in which, without any heſitation either for Thoughts, or for Language, he took off the Force of all that the *Profeſſor* had ſaid, in ſuch a Manner, that many of the Auditors declared themſelves aſtoniſhed; and own'd that, if they had not been within Sight of him, they ſhould have ſuppoſed him to have read Every word of this *Reply* out of a Paper. After this, thro' the Courſe of the *Syllogiſtical* Diſputation, he guarded ſo well againſt the Arts which the *Profeſſor* was Maſter of in perfection; he replied ſo readily to the greateſt Difficulties that ſuch an *Objector* could propoſe; and preſs'd upon the *Profeſſor* ſo cloſe and ſo hard with his Anſwers, clear and intelligible to All; that perhaps Never was ſuch a Conflict heard in thoſe *Schools*; never ſuch a Diſputation kept up for ſo long a time with ſuch Spirit; nor ever Any, which Ended with greater, if Equal honour, to the *Reſpondent*. The *Profeſſor* himſelf, who was a Man of *Humour* as well as *Learning*, ſaid to him aloud, towards the End of the Diſputation, (an Accidental Debate having ariſen, as I have been informed, about the meaning of the word *Exacuo*,) *Profecto, Me probé exacuiſti*: which I hardly know how to interpret to the *Engliſh Reader*, unleſs by a phraſe of a low kind, *In truth You have thoroughly rubb'd me up*. Others think the word was *Exercuiſti*. They remember that the Profeſſor uſed often to ſpeak to a *Reſpondent*, after a long Diſputation, *Finem jam faciam; Nam* Te *probé* exercui: *I will now make an End; for I have ſufficiently* work'd *You:* and ſay, that he was going to uſe the ſame Expreſſion to Dr. *Clarke*; but after the word *Te*, ſtop'd and corrected himſelf, and ſaid, ---- *Nam* ME *probé* Exercuiſti. ------ *For You have* work'd Me *thoroughly*. This was look'd upon as a very high Compliment, in *His* humourous way of ſpeaking. And the Learned Members of that Body, who had with pleaſure attended to Every part of the whole *Diſputation*, went away diſcourſing to one another of the Unuſual Entertainment they had had in the Schools; not a little pleaſed with ſuch an Ornament to their own Univerſity: and admiring particularly, that, after an Abſence of ſo many Years, and a long courſe of Buſineſs of quite Another Nature, they heard him now handling the Subjects he undertook, in ſuch a maſterly Manner, as if this ſort of Academical Exerciſe had been his Conſtant Employment; and with ſuch a Fluency and Purity of Expreſſion, as if he had been accuſtomed, thro' this whole Time, to no other Language in Converſation but *Latin*.

SOON after this, Another Scene opened. He had for a conſiderable time employed his Thoughts and Studies upon a Subject of a very high Nature, which had exerciſed the Pens of many of the greateſt Divines; I mean, the Doctrine of the *Trinity*: and was now come to a ſettled Judgment about it. But, let Every Man of ſenſe be Judge with how much Wiſdom, and in how Chriſtian a Method, he proceeded to form his own Sentiments upon ſo Important a Point. He knew, and All men agreed, that it was a Matter of *Mere Revelation*. He did not therefore, retire into his Cloſet; and ſet himſelf to invent and forge a plauſible *Hypotheſis*, which might ſit eaſily upon

upon his own Mind. He had not recourſe to Abſtract and *Metaphyſical* Reaſonings, to cover or patronize any *Syſtem* he might have embraced before. But, as a Chriſtian, he laid open the *New Teſtament* before him, he ſearch'd out *Every Text*, in which Mention was made of the *Three Perſons*, or of any *One* of them. He accurately examined the Meaning of the Words uſed about every one of them: and by the beſt Rules of *Grammar* and *Critique*, and by his Skill in Language, he endeavour'd to fix plainly what was declared about every Perſon; and what was not. And what he thought he had diſcover'd to be the *Truth*, he publiſh'd under the *Title* of the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Trinity*.

I AM far from taking upon me to determine, in ſo difficult a Queſtion, between him, and thoſe who made Replies to him. The Debate ſoon grew very warm: and in a little time ſeem'd to reſt principally upon *him*, and *one* particular Adverſary, very skilful in the Management of a Debate, and very Learned and Well-verſed in the Writings of the Antient Fathers. The *Controverſy* has been long before the World: and all who can read what has been alledged on both Sides, ought to judge for themſelves. But this, I hope, I may be allowed to ſay, that every Chriſtian Divine, and Layman, ought to pay his Thanks to Dr. *Clarke*, for the Method into which he brought this Diſpute; and for that Collection of *Texts* in the *New Teſtament*, by which at laſt it muſt be decided; on which ſide ſoever the Truth be ſuppoſed to lie. And let me add this one word more, that, ſince Men of ſuch Thought and ſuch Learning, have ſhewn the World, in their own Example, how widely the moſt honeſt Enquirers after *Truth* may differ, upon ſuch Subjects: This methinks, ſhould a little abate our Mutual Cenſures; and a little take off from our Poſitiveneſs, about the Neceſſity of explaining, in *this* or *that* one determinate Senſe, the Antient Paſſages relating to Points of ſo Sublime a Nature.

I PASS over the Complaint made, in Convocation, againſt this Treatiſe concerning the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Trinity*: becauſe it ſoon ended, upon the *Right Reverend*, the Members of the *Upper-houſe*, having declared themſelves ſatisfied with the Explanations which the *Author* delivered in to them, upon the *Subject* of the *Complaint*.

ONE Matter of Fact I will add, that from the Time of his publiſhing this *Book*, to the Day of his *Death*, he found no reaſon, as far as he was able to judge, to alter the Notions which he had there profeſſed, concerning the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, towards any of thoſe *Schemes* which ſeem'd to him to derogate from the *Honour* of the *Father*, on one ſide; or from that of the *Son*, and *Spirit*, on the other. This I thought proper juſt to mention, as what all his Friends know to be the *Truth*. And indeed, nothing to the contrary can be alledged without contradicting many Expreſs Sentences, ſcattered through all his Works which have followed, or will follow, the fore-mention'd *Treatiſe*; evidently ſetting forth, or implying, the ſame Doctrine.

FROM the Time of his taking poſſeſſion of St. *James*'s, his Reſidence was where his Heart and his Employment were; in the *Rectory-Houſe*, in the midſt of his Pariſhioners; ſeldom leaving the Place at all, unleſs for a few Weeks, in the *long Vacation*, when the

the Town was empty: which he ſpent in viſiting his Friends at *Norwich*, and other places; and, towards the latter part of his Life, in doing his Duty as Maſter of *Wigſton*'s *Hoſpital* at *Leiceſter*: a *Poſt* of no very great profit, but made agreeable to him by the handſome Manner in which the late Lord *Lechmere* invited him into it; and by the Method of taking poſſeſſion of it, free from ſome of thoſe Circumſtances which by Law attend upon moſt other Preferments.

DURING the Time of his being *Rector* of St. *James*'s, beſides the regular performance of All the other Offices of his Profeſſion, he followed the Cuſtom of his *Predeceſſors*, in reading *Lectures* upon the *Church-Catechiſm*, every *Thurſday* morning, for ſome months in the Year. In the latter part of his Time, he reviſed theſe with great Care; and left them, under the *Title* of an *Expoſition* upon that *Catechiſm*, completely prepared for the *Preſs*. This *Expoſition* has been publiſhed, according to his own expreſs Deſire, ſince his Death. The *Remarks* of a *Learned* Man followed it, as ſoon as it could well be read in the World. An *Anſwer* has been made to theſe *Remarks*: and the World muſt judge on which ſide Truth and Light appear.

BUT though *Divinity*, and the Studies peculiar to his Profeſſion, were his great Employment; yet this did not hinder his Genius from ſhewing itſelf in other ſorts of Learning, worthy of a Man, and of a Clergyman. The firſt Specimen he gave the World of his Knowledge in the *Profane Authors*, was his Edition of *Cæſar*'s *Commentaries*, 1712. in *Folio*, dedicated to his Grace the Duke of MARLBOROUGH, at a Time, when his Unequal'd Victories and Succeſſes had raiſed his Glory to the higheſt pitch abroad, and leſſen'd his Intereſt and Favour at home. Of this I ſhall only ſay, That there are few Books in the World, that excel it, either for Beauty or Correctneſs; and that the *Notes* added ſhew the *Accuracy* of their Author.

THE laſt Inſtance of his *Critical* and *Claſſical* Learning was the Laſt Piece he publiſhed: The firſt *Twelve Books* of *Homer*'s *Ilias*, with an almoſt New *Tranſlation*, and *Notes*. *Homer* was his Admired Author, even to a degree of Something like *Enthuſiaſm* hardly natural to his Temper. In this he went a little beyond the Bounds of *Horace*'s Judgment: and was ſo unwilling to allow the *Favourite-Poet* ever to *Nod*, that he has taken remarkable pains to find out and give a Reaſon for every Paſſage, Word, and Tittle, that could create any ſuſpicion. The Tranſlation, with his Corrections, may now be ſtiled Accurate: and his *Notes*, as far as they go, are indeed a Treaſury of *Grammatical* and *Critical* Knowledge. He was called to this Task, by Royal Command: and he has performed it in ſuch a Manner, as to be worthy of the *Young Prince*, for whoſe Uſe it was laboured. The Praiſes given to this Excellent Work, by the Writers abroad in their *Memoirs*; as well as by the Learned Maſters of the Three principal Schools of *England*; Thoſe of *Weſtminſter*, *Eaton*, and St. *Paul*'s; and the ſhort Character, that the Performance was *Supra omnem invidiam*, beſtowed by One whom Dr. *Clarke* himſelf had long before ſtiled, *Criticos unus omnes longé longéque ------ antecellens*, and whom every one will know by that Title without my naming him, make it unneceſſary to add a Word upon this Subject.

IN

In the midſt of his Other Labours, he found time alſo to ſhew his Regard to the *Mathematical* and *Phyſical* Studies; and his exact Knowledge and Skill in them. For *theſe* indeed, he had a ſort of a Natural Affection, and Capacity; which were greatly improved by the particular Friendſhip of the incomparable Sir *Iſaac Newton*, whoſe Death only put an End to it; and by the Light communicated to him from his Writings and Converſation. At Sir *Iſaac*'s Requeſt, he tranſlated his Treatiſe of *Optics*, into that pure and intelligible *Latin*, which has ſent it all over *Europe* in a plainer and leſs ambiguous Stile, than the *Engliſh Language* will ſometimes permit. And after the death of that Great Man, he vindicated his Doctrine about the Proportion of *Velocity* and *Force* in *Bodies* in *Motion*, from the Objections of ſome late Mathematicians, in a ſhort, plain, and Maſterly Letter, printed in the Tranſactions of the Royal Society, N° 401. 1728. and in a manner ſufficient to ſhew the excellent Greatneſs of his *Genius* for theſe *Subjects* as well as Others.

I must not paſs by a very remarkable Controverſy, which laſted long, in a private manner, between him and the learned Mr. *Leibnitz*; and afterwards was publiſhed, and inſcribed to her preſent Majesty, who was pleaſed to have it paſs through her Hands: and was the Witneſs and Judge of every Step of it. It related chiefly to the Important and Difficult Subjects of *Liberty* and *Neceſſity*. This *Liberty*, or *Moral Agency*, was a *Darling Point* to him. He excelled always, and ſhewed a Superiority to all, whenever it came into Private Diſcourſe, or Publick Debate. But he never more excell'd, than when he was preſs'd with the Strength this *Learned Adverſary* was Maſter of: which made him exert all his Talents to ſet it once again in a Clear light; to guard it againſt the Evil of *Metaphyſical Obſcurities*; and to give the finiſhing Stroke to a *Subject*, which muſt ever be the *Foundation* of Morality in Man; and is the Sole Ground of the Accountableneſs of Intelligent Creatures for all their Actions. And as this was the laſt of Dr. *Clarke*'s Works relating to a Subject which had been, by the Writings of Cloudy or Artful Men, render'd ſo intricate; I ſhall take the Liberty to ſay, with regard to all of the ſame Tendency, from his Firſt Diſcourſe about the Being of GOD, to theſe Letters; that what he has written to clear and illuſtrate this Cauſe, does now ſtand, and will for ever remain, before the World, a laſting Monument of a *Genius*, which could throw in Light where Darkneſs uſed to reign; and force Good Senſe and Plain Words, into what was almoſt the *Privileged place* of *Obſcurity*, and Unintelligible Sounds. For ſuch indeed, had the *Subject* before us been, under the hands of Moſt who had written upon it; either through a *deſire* of darkening it by Words without Meaning, or through an *Inability* of diſcourſing clearly and conſiſtently about it.

Such was the Conduct, and ſuch was the Life of Dr. *Clarke*; full of Deſigns and Works, becoming a Truly Great Man, intimately concern'd for his own Real Happineſs; and for that of all Intelligent Creatures and Moral Agents around him. And, in the midſt of all theſe *Studies* and Labours, his Natural *Conſtitution* of *Body* was in appearance ſo good, and his Care of his health was ſo conſtantly and regularly prudent; that all the Friends to his Perſon, and

to true Knowledge, promiſed themſelves and the World a much longer Enjoyment of ſuch uſeful Accompliſhments, than it pleaſed GOD to afford them. He paſs'd his Life, without any Indiſpoſition bad enough to confine him, except that of the *Small-Pox* in his Youth, till his laſt Illneſs, though ſince his Death, many little Particulars, and Complaints have been call'd to mind, which ſeem to have been Evident *Symptoms* of ſome Weakneſs, or Some what wrong, which he uſed to feel within. On *Sunday, May* 11, 1729, He went out in the Morning, to preach before the *Judges* at *Serjeant's-Inn*: and there was ſeized with a *Pain* in his Side, which made it impoſſible for him to perform the Office he was called to; and quickly became ſo violent that he was obliged to be carried home. He went to bed; and thought himſelf ſo much better in the Afternoon, that he would not ſuffer himſelf to be blooded; againſt which Remedy he had indeed entertained ſtrong prejudices. But the Pain returning very violently about Two the next Morning, made the Advice and Aſſiſtance of a very able Phyſician abſolutely neceſſary: Who, after twice bleeding him, and other applications, thought him, as he alſo thought himſelf, to be out of all Danger; and ſo continued to think, till the *Saturday* Morning following: When, to the inexpreſſible Surprize of all about him, the *Pain* removed from his *Side* to his *Head*; and, after a very ſhort Complaint, took away his Senſes, ſo as that they never returned any more. He continued breathing till between ſeven and eight in the Evening of that Day, *May* 17. 1729. and then died: and by his Death (Let me be permitted to ſay it) left the World deſtitute of as Bright a *Light*, and as Maſterly a Teacher of *Truth* and *Virtue*, as ever yet appeared amongſt Us.

He married *Catherine*, the only Daughter of the Reverend Mr. *Lockwood*, Rector of *Little Maſſingham* in the County of *Norfolk*; in whoſe Good Senſe and Unblameable Behaviour he was happy to his Death. By her, he had *Seven* Children; *Two* of which died before him, and *One*, in a few weeks after him.

He was a Perſon of a *Natural Genius*, excellent enough to have placed him in the Superior rank of Men, without the Acquirements of *Learning*: and of *Learning* enough, to have render'd a much leſs Comprehenſive *Genius* very conſiderable in the Eyes of the World. But in *him* they were both united, to ſuch a degree, that thoſe who were of his intimate Acquaintance, knew not which to admire moſt. The firſt Strokes of Knowledge, in ſome of its Branches, ſeem'd to be little leſs than *Natural* to him: For they appear'd to lie right in his Mind, as ſoon as any thing could appear; and to be the very ſame which afterwards grew up with him, into perfection, as the Strength and Cultivation of his Mind increaſed. He had one Happineſs very rarely known amongſt the Greateſt Men, that his *Memory* was almoſt equal to his *Judgment*: which is as Great a Character as can well be given of it. It did not indeed, appear in Trifles; nor in Every part of Knowledge: But in thoſe particularly which regarded the Claſſical and pureſt Writers of the Antients; or any Part of Real and Experimental Philoſophy; as well as what can truly be called *Theology*, it was ſurprizingly excellent; and of wonderful Uſe to him, through all his Studies, and all his Converſation.

In

In *Divinity*, it was his great Aim to ſettle beyond all Contradiction what muſt be the Support of true Religion; and then to ſhew the Evidences for what muſt rely upon that Support. The *neceſſary Exiſtence* of *One* only GOD, and the Impoſſibility of the *Exiſtence* of more than One, he juſtly eſteem'd as the *Foundation* of all. This neceſſary *Unity* of the Supreme Being appears throughout his Writings to have been ever uppermoſt in his Thoughts: a Subject, which, though often excellently handled, and made as Evident as any Arguments and Illuſtrations *à Poſteriori* could make it; yet had never, I think, before his Time, been attempted in the Way of *ſtrict Demonſtration à Priori:* which certainly is the ſtrongeſt, and therefore, the moſt deſirable of *All* Proofs, where it can be had. *He* undertook the Task: and many of the beſt Judges, after a great deal of Conſideration, have allowed that he has executed it in a maſterly and ſatisfactory Manner: with ſo much Evidence indeed, as generally to convince thoſe who are capable of entring into this ſort of Queſtions. I ſay, *Generally*; becauſe I am ſenſible, there are ſome very underſtanding Perſons who do not yet ſee this *Evidence* ſo clearly as Others do.

In *Morality*, it was his great and principal View to do laſting ſervice to the eternal Obligations of *Virtue*; that is, of every Inſtance of Practice and Conduct towards GOD, our Neighbour, and our Selves, which reſults from the Nature and Relations of Things: and this he has done in the plaineſt and moſt intelligible Manner.

In the Cauſe of *Chriſtianity* he labour'd as ſincerely, and, with the ſame Clearneſs and Strength, produced and illuſtrated all the *Evidences* peculiar to it: not indeed, conſidering it, as it has been taught in the Schools or Diſcourſes of modern Ages; but as it lies in the *New Teſtament* itſelf.

And throughout all this, as his *Firſt Principle* was the *Unity* of GOD, which he eſteemed the only Guard againſt *Idolatry*, as well as the *Baſis* of all moral Obedience; ſo, next to this, nothing ſeem'd to be more ſtrong within him, than his Inclination to ſettle the true Notions of *Neceſſity* and *Liberty* in what is called *Action*. This he has done in a very convincing Manner, and at the ſame time demonſtrated, beyond all reaſonable doubt, that Freedom of *Action* in *Man*, which only can make him at all *Accountable* to his *Creator*, as a Judge of his Behaviour. Such was the Courſe he ran, in the Cauſe of that Religion, which alone can be ſtiled worthy of GOD to propoſe, or of *Man* to embrace!

In *Natural Philoſophy*, and the *Mathematical* Knowledge neceſſary to it, amidſt all his other Employments, he excelled, as if theſe had been his *Darling Study*. Not that he could poſſibly find Time himſelf to make all the proper *Experiments*, or neceſſary *Calculations*. But he had I know not what happineſs of Genius, by which he immediately comprehended what coſt others a great deal of Pains; and ſuch a Faculty of judging of any New *Syſtems*, or *Propoſitions*, from what he knew certainly before; and theſe ſupported by a *Memory* which hardly ever failed him upon theſe Subjects; that he was eſteemed, by the *Knowers*, to be one of the beſt Judges, to apply to, for a quick Determination about the Force or Failure of any Arguments, or appearing Demonſtrations, in theſe Studies.

His

His *Critical* Skill in the learned Languages was like the Gift of Nature; ſo ſtrong and ſo eaſy in him, that it appeared plainly, to what a wide Extent this would have gone, had not his other Affairs and Studies put a neceſſary Stop to what he was ſo exquiſitely framed for. Great as the Impediments were; we ſee, his *Memory* and his Judgment in this part of Learning were ſo Strong and Powerful, that they ſhone through them all in a few Inſtances; and theſe, ſufficient to make all Men of Letters wiſh that he could have ſpent more of his Time this way. It is for his honour to obſerve that he made this Critical Skill ſubſervient to the *Cauſe* of *Religion*, as well as *Polite Learning*; and gave a Noble Specimen of applying it to the diſcovery of the true Meaning of Words and Phraſes uſed in the *Sacred Writings*: without which, we do but wander in the dark, when we pretend to ſpeak upon many of the *Subjects* contained in thoſe Books.

As much as I have ſaid already of his Excellencies in Learning; there is ſtill *One* behind, which was (I had almoſt ſaid) ſtrictly peculiar to him: I mean the manner of his handling Subjects of a *Metaphyſical* and *Abſtract* Nature. In this Skill, he had a Superiority ſo viſible; that, I think, the Greateſt Maſters of it ought to yield it up to Him. This Superiority appeared by his ſhewing that he had always clear and diſtinct Ideas; by clothing them with plain and intelligible Words; by going no farther than theſe *Ideas* and *Words* could go together; and by arguing as cloſely upon the abſtruſeſt Points which he pretended to underſtand, as is uſual in *Mathematical* Deductions themſelves.

If in *any one* of theſe many Branches of *Knowledge* and *Learning* he had excelled only ſo much, as he did in *All*; this alone would have juſtly intitled him to the Name of a *Great Man*. But there is ſomething ſo very extraordinary, that the ſame Perſon ſhould excel, not only in thoſe Parts of Knowledge which require the Strongeſt *Judgment*, but in thoſe which want the help of the ſtrongeſt *Memory* alſo; and it is ſo ſeldom ſeen, that one, who is a Great Maſter in *Theology*, is at the ſame time skilfully fond of all *Critical* and *Claſſical* Learning; or Excellent in the *Phyſical* and *Mathematical* Studies; or well framed for *Metaphyſical* and *Abſtract* Reaſonings: That it ought to be remarked, in how particular a Manner, and to how high a degree, *Divinity* and *Mathematicks*, *Experimental Philoſophy* and *Claſſical Learning*, *Metaphyſics* and *Critical Skill*, all of them, (various and different as they are amongſt themſelves,) united in Dr. *Clarke*.

This way of ſpeaking of him, with regard to all theſe, may ſound ſo high, that many perhaps who are Strangers to him, and to his real Excellencies, may think, I have ſaid too much. But I am confident, (and this is my Satisfaction) that in all that I have ſaid upon theſe Subjects, I have the Conſent and Teſtimony of many of the moſt Judicious and Learned Men, of all Denominations amongſt us; as well thoſe who did not come into all his Sentiments, as thoſe who did.

His *Preaching* was what one would naturally expect from a Perſon of ſo Critical a *Genius*, and ſo ſedate a *Judgment*. The Deſign and Tendency of it was not to move the paſſions: nor had he any *Talent* this way. He wiſely never attempted it, becauſe he was ſenſible he ſhould not ſucceed if he did. And if this was a *Defect*, it was a

Defect

Defect in his original Frame and Conſtitution. But then, his Sentiments and Expreſſion were ſo maſterly; his way of explaining the *Phraſeology* of *Scripture*, by collecting, and comparing together, all the Parallel Places truly relating to any Subject, was ſo Extraordinary and Convincing; that ſuch a Delight of Satisfaction went along with it, as more than made amends for the Want of the *Other*. And in this Method of Preaching, he was ſo univerſally acceptable, that perhaps there was not a *Pariſhioner* he had, of any Rank, (whatever might be his way of thinking in our divided World,) who was not always pleaſed at his coming into the Pulpit; or, who was ever weary of his Inſtructions from thence. *However we differ in ſome matters, we deſire to ſee no other Perſon in the Pulpit*; was, I know, a Saying amongſt them. And it is for their honour that I mention it.

THESE Accompliſhments of *Nature* and *Learning* not only made his *Preaching* thus Excellent; but render'd his *Converſation* amongſt his Friends in ſo high a degree Uſeful and Inſtructive, that it might be ſtiled an eaſy Continuation of his own Studies and a School of Knowledge to thoſe who partook of it. Indeed, if I might be allowed to judge in what that peculiar Excellence lay, which moſt diſtinguiſhed him from other great Men; I would place it in that Readineſs of Thought, and Clearneſs of Expreſſion, which hardly ever fail'd him, when his Opinion was asked, upon all ſorts of Important and Trying Queſtions. The Pleaſure and Satisfaction which appeared where he converſed with any Freedom, could not but be very great; to hear many of the Difficulties which had perplexed very able Men in their ſeveral Profeſſions and Studies, though ſtarted all on a ſudden, vaniſhing almoſt as ſuddenly; leſſening continually as faſt as he ſpake, and generally ending with his Diſcourſe. *Here* indeed, it was that he triumph'd without a Rival. They who fancied themſelves in Doubts never to be ſatisfied, often found Light from him, after having vainly tried to find it elſewhere: and they who did not ſee to the End of their Difficulties immediately, yet had this Comfort, that they always underſtood him, as far as he went; and at leaſt that Satisfaction which is the next to finding out the whole Truth, I mean the Satisfaction of being convinced that it was in vain to expect it. Thoſe who knew him, have been daily Witneſſes to what I now ſay, in *Mathematical* and *Critical*, as well as *Theological* and *Metaphyſical* Subjects: Upon the laſt of which indeed, he was one of the *very Few*, who could, or would, always talk intelligibly. His Diſcourſe of this ſort was without one Word or Term, which he was not as ready to give a plain Senſe to, as he was to make uſe of it; and in a Stile which he would take as great a pleaſure to adapt to the Underſtanding of all perſons of Senſe, as many would do, to raiſe their Language even out of their own reach, as well as that of others. For he judged, that as the Uſe of Language was to expreſs Thoughts; ſo *Thoſe ſounds* could not be juſtly called *Language*, which repreſented no Thoughts at all. Such was his *Converſation* amongſt his Friends: always far removed from *Pedantry*; and never ariſing from his own *affectation* of introducing *Learning* into it; but from the Enquiries of *Others*, or the *Occaſions* which naturally and unavoidably led to it.

WHAT added a Force to his *Preaching* and Inſtructive *Diſcourſe*, was his own unblameable Example, and Perſonal Conduct, in all the Duties of a Man and a Chriſtian. His Piety was Manly and Unaffected; built upon the moſt ſolid Grounds, and free from all Pomp and Shew. The

Charity of his Temper and Good-will was as Extenſive as the whole Rational Creation of God. The *Charity* of his Aſſiſtance and Beneficence, as Extenſive as the Circumſtances of his Family would prudently admit. His Love of the Religious and civil Liberties of Mankind, was a Ruling and Powerful Principle in his Heart and Practice. In a word, his Morals, from the firſt of his Days, to the laſt, were without Reproach. There was an Innocence and Inoffenſiveneſs remarkable thro' his whole Behaviour: And his *Life*, when he came into the View of the Great World, was an Ornament and Strength to that Religion which his *Pen* ſo well defended.

No wonder that a Perſon of ſuch a *Genius*, and ſuch *Acquirements* was ſought after by the greateſt Lovers of Virtue and Knowledge. This was his Caſe, to ſuch a Degree, that, thro' his laſt Years, he could command but very little time for his own Studies, even in the *Morning*; and after the *Morning* was over, he was almoſt every day invited and preſs'd amongſt his Friends abroad; not only thoſe of his own Pariſh, who were equally deſirous of his Company; but many in all the other parts of the Town.

The *Chief Perſons* of the *Law* will forgive me, if I can't paſs over the ſingular Regard they paid to this great Man: which was ſo remarkable, that it ſeem'd to be a ſort of Conteſt amongſt them, who ſhould ſhew it moſt. The *Lord High Chancellor*, the *Maſter* of the *Rolls*, the Lord *Chief Baron*, and ſeveral of his Brethren the Learned *Judges*, (not to mention *others*) will, I am confident, eſteem it their Honour to have it ſaid, ſince it can be ſaid with Truth, that there never yet appear'd a Divine amongſt us, (not related to *them* by his Office,) who received ſuch continued and ſuch particular Marks of the higheſt Reſpect from ſo many Ornaments of that *Honourable Profeſſion*, as he did, from the Day of his being firſt known amongſt them, to that day, on which ſome of them were Witneſſes to the approaches of his laſt Illneſs.

The Regards paid to him by the Beſt of the Powerful and Noble part of our World, were as Conſtant and as Remarkable. Above all, it ought ever to be remember'd, wherever the Name of Dr. *Clarke* is remember'd, that her Preſent *MAJESTY*, from her firſt Acquaintance with his Character to the Day of his Death, expreſs'd the high Eſteem ſhe had of his comprehenſive Capacity, and uſeful Learning, by very frequent Converſations with him, upon many of the moſt important and entertaining Points of true Philoſophy, and real Knowledge. And ſeldom a Week paſs'd in which SHE did not with pleaſure receive ſome proof of the Greatneſs of his Genius, and of the Force of his ſuperior Underſtanding.

If any one ſhould ask, as it is natural to do, how it came to paſs that this great Man was never raiſed higher in the *Church?* I muſt anſwer, that it was neither for want of Merit, nor Intereſt, nor the Favour of ſome in whoſe Power it was to have raiſed him. But he had *Reaſons* within his own Breaſt, which hinder'd him either from ſeeking after, or accepting any ſuch Promotion. Of theſe he was the proper, and indeed the only Judge: and therefore I ſay no more of them. He was happy in that Station, in which it had pleaſed GOD to fix him before thoſe *Reaſons* took place: and he had not in him, either the Deſire of Dignity, or Love of Riches ſtrong enough to make him uneaſy for any thing

more

more than what afforded him and his Family a Decent appearance and place in Life. And, agreeably to this Character, as he ſought after no promotion in the *Church*; ſo, he refuſed the offer of a very beneficial *Civil* Office.

THUS adorned with the moſt Valuable of all moral and intellectual Accompliſhments, he lived in the Eſteem of the Wiſe and Good and Great; and died ſincerely lamented by every Friend to Learning, Truth, and Virtue.

I HAVE thus paid that laſt Duty to the Memory of this Excellent Man, which I could not but eſteem a Debt to ſuch a Benefactor to the Cauſe of *Religion* and *Learning* united. And, as theſe WORKS of his muſt laſt as long as any Language remains to convey them to future times; perhaps I may flatter myſelf that this faint and imperfect Account of him may be tranſmitted down with them. And I hope, it will be thought a pardonable piece of Ambition, and Self-Intereſtedneſs; if, being fearful leſt every thing elſe ſhould prove too weak to keep the Remembrance of myſelf in being, I lay hold on *his* Fame, to prop and ſupport *my own*. I am ſure, as I have little Reaſon to expect that any thing of mine, without ſuch an Aſſiſtance, can live: I ſhall think myſelf greatly recompenſed for the want of any other Memorial, if *my* Name may go down to Poſterity thus cloſely joined to *his*; and I myſelf be thought of, and ſpoke of, in Ages to come, under the Character of *The FRIEND* of Dr. *CLARKE*.

BENJ. SARUM.

CONTENTS.

6 AU 62

CONTENTS.

SERMON I. Of Faith in God.

Heb. xi. 6. *But without Faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe him: For he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Page 1

SERM. II, III. Of the Unity of God.

Matt. iv. 10. latter part. *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* 8, 13

SERM. IV. Of the Eternity of God.

Rev. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, ſaith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* 19

SERM. V, VI. Of the Spirituality of God.

John iv. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.* 25, 32

SERM. VII. Of the Immutability of God.

Mal. iii. 6. *For I am the Lord; I change not.* 39

SERM. VIII. Of the Omnipreſence of God.

1 Kings viii. 27. *But will God indeed dwell on the Earth? behold, the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain Thee* — 46

SERM. IX, X. Of the Omnipotence of God.

Pſal. cxlvii. 5. *Great is our Lord, and Great is his* Power. 53, 59

SERM. XI. Of the Omniſcience of God.

Job xxxvii. 16. laſt part. *Of Him that is perfect in Knowledge.* 66

SERM. XII, XIII. Of the Wiſdom of God.

Col. ii. 3. *In whom are hid all the Treaſures of* Wiſdom. 73, 80

SERM. XIV. Of the Goodneſs of God.

Pſal. cxlv. 9. *The Lord is Good to All; and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.* 87

SERM. XV. Of the Patience of God.

Eccleſ. viii. 11. *Becauſe Sentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men, is fully ſet in them to do Evil.* 96

SERM. XVI, XVII. Of the Juſtice of God.

Job xxxiv. 10, 11, 12. *Therefore hearken unto Me, ye Men of Underſtanding: Far be it from God, that He ſhould do wickedneſs; and from the Almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity: For the Work of a Man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every Man to find according to his Ways: Yea, ſurely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert Judgment.* 100, 107

SERM. XVIII, XIX. Of the Glory of God.

1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* 114, 121

SERM. XX. Of God's being the Father of Mankind.

St. Matt. xxiii. 9. *And call no man your Father upon the Earth; For One is your Father which is in Heaven.* 127

SERM. XXI. Of being the Children of God.

Rom. viii. 16, 17. *The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God: and if Children then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Chriſt.* 134

SERM. XXII. Of Loving God.

St. Matt. xxii. 37, 38. *Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; This is the Firſt and Great Commandment.* 140

SERM. XXIII. Of the Fear of God.

Job xxiii. 15. *Therefore am I troubled at his preſence: When I conſider, I am afraid of him.* 147

SERM. XXIV. Of the Wiſdom of being Religious.

Prov. ix. 10, 11. *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding; For by me thy Days ſhall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.* 152

SERM. XXV. Of imitating the Holineſs of God.

1 Pet. i. 15, 16. *But as he which hath called you, is Holy; ſo be ye Holy, in all manner of Converſation; Becauſe it is written, Be ye Holy, for I am Holy.* 159

SERM.

SERM. XXVI, XXVII. Of the Love of God towards Sinners.

St. John iii. 16. *For God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* 165, 172

SERM. XXVIII. Of Believing in God.

Rom. iv. 3. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for Righteouſneſs.* 179

SERM. XXIX. Of the Grace of God.

Tit. ii. 11, 12. *For the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men: Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World.* 186

SERM. XXX, XXXI. Of the Grace of God.

Phil. ii. latter part of the 12th, and the 13th Verſe. *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.* 192, 198

SERM. XXXII. Of the Kingdom of God.

St. Matt. vi. 10. *Thy Kingdom come.* 205

SERM. XXXIII, XXXIV. Of the Kingdom of God.

St. Matt. vi. 33. *But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* 212, 219

SERM. XXXV. Of the Liberty of Moral Agents.

St. John viii. 32. *And ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you Free.* 225

SERM. XXXVI. A Virtuous Mind the beſt Help to underſtand True Religion.

Dan. xii. 10. latter part. ----- *And none of the Wicked ſhall underſtand; But the Wiſe ſhall Underſtand.* 233

SERM. XXXVII. The Practice of Morality leads to the Practice of the Goſpel.

St. John vi. 44. *No man can come to Me, except the Father which has ſent me, draw him.* 242

SERM. XXXVIII. The Character of a Good Man.

Gen. xviii. 19. *For I know Him, that he will command his Children, and his Houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment.* 248

SERM.

SERM. XXXIX. The Nature of Human Actions.

St. Luke xi. 35. *Take heed therefore, that the Light which is in Thee be not Darkneſs.* 254

SERM. XL. How to judge of Moral Actions.

St. Luke vi. 44. *For every Tree is known by his own Fruit: for of Thorns men do not gather Figs, nor of a Bramble-buſh gather they Grapes.* 260

SERM. XLI. The Nature of Religious Truths.

2 TIM. ii. 25. *In Meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.* 266

SERM. XLII. Of Chriſt's calling Sinners to Repentance.

St. Mark ii. 17. *When Jeſus heard it, he ſaid unto them, They that are whole have no need of the Phyſician, but they that are ſick: I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* 272

SERM. XLIII. The Excellency of Moral Qualifications.

Acts xi. 24. *For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt.* 278

SERM. XLIV, XLV. Of Humility.

St. Luke xiv. 11. *For whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.* 284, 291

SERM. XLVI. Of Poverty of Spirit.

St. Matt. v. 3. *Bleſſed are the Poor in Spirit; for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* 298

SERM. XLVII, XLVIII. Of the Virtue of Charity.

1 Cor. xiii. 3. *And though I beſtow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.* 304, 311

SERM. XLIX. The Nature of Relative Duties.

Col. iii. 20, 21, 22. *Children obey your Parents in all things; for this is well-pleaſing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your Children to Anger, leſt they be diſcouraged. Servants, obey in all things your Maſters according to the Fleſh.* 318

SERM. L. The Inconſiſtency of the Love of God, with the Love of the World.

1 John ii. 15. *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World: If any man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* 324

SERM. LI. The Folly of mocking at Sin.

Prov. xiv. 9. *Fools make a Mock at Sin.* 330

SERM.

SERM. LII, LIII. Of that Belief which is neceſſary to Baptiſm.

St. Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; But he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* 337, 344

SERM. LIV. The Deſign and End of Baptiſm is Newneſs of Life.

Rom. vi. 3. 4. *Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the Dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo We alſo ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life.* 351

SERM. LV. Of being baptized into the Name of any Perſon.

1 Cor. i. 13. — *or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* 357

SERM. LVI, LVII. The Nature, End and Deſign of the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 25. *After the ſame manner alſo he took the Cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood; This do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.* 363, 369

SERM. LVIII. The Nature, End and Deſign of the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 25, latter part. — *This do ye, as oft as ye Drink it, in remembrance of me.* 375

SERM. LIX. The Nature, End and Deſign of the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 27. *Wherefore, whoſoever ſhall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, ſhall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.* 382

SERM. LX, LXI, LXII. Of the Catholick Church of Chriſt.

Heb. xii. 22, 23. *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of All, and to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the new Covenant.* 389, 395, 401

SERM. LXIII. Of the Number of Thoſe that ſhall be ſaved.

Rev. iii. 4. *Thou haſt a few Names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their Garments; and they ſhall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.* 408

SERM. LXIV. The Qualification of Thoſe that ſhall be ſaved.

Rev. iii. 4. *Thou haſt a few Names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their Garments; and they ſhall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.* 415

SERM. LXV. That the Terms of Salvation are offered to all Men.

Rev. ii. 29. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* 422

SERM. LXVI. The Qualifications neceſſary to receive the Terms of Salvation.

Rev. ii. 29. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* 428

SERM. LXVII. Mens not accepting the Terms of Salvation is from Themſelves.

Rev. ii. 29. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* 435

SERM. LXVIII. Of the Nature of true Chriſtian Zeal.

Rev. iii. 15, 16. *I know thy Works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my Mouth.* 442

SERM. LXIX. The miraculous Birth of CHRIST. [*Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.*]

Matt. i. 22, 23. *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken of the Lord by the Prophet, ſaying; Behold, a Virgin ſhall be with Child, and ſhall bring forth a Son, and they ſhall call his Name* Emmanuel, *which being interpreted is God with Us.* 448

SERM. LXX. The Prediction of the MESSIAH. [*Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.*]

Iſaiah ix. 6. *Unto Us a Child is born, unto Us a Son is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and his Name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.* 454

SERM. LXXI. The Character of the MESSIAH. [*Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.*]

Gal. iv. 4, 5. *But when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law; To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.* 461

SERM. LXXII. Of the Fulneſs of Time in which CHRIST appeared. [*Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.*]

Gal. iv. 4, and 5. *But when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.* 466

SERM.

SERM. LXXIII. Of the meaning of, The Name of GOD. [*Preached on Epiphany.*]

Mal. i. 11. *For from the riſing of the Sun, even unto the going down of the ſame, my Name ſhall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place, Incenſe ſhall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name ſhall be* Great *among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* 472

SERM. LXXIV. The Doctrines of Religion reaſonable to be believed. [*A Paſſion-Sermon.*]

Matt. xii. 39, 40. *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign, and there ſhall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; ſo ſhall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the Heart of the Earth.* 478

SERM. LXXV. Unreaſonable Expectations not to be gratified in Religion. [*A Paſſion-Sermon.*]

Matt. xii. 39. *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign, and there ſhall No Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.* 484

SERM. LXXVI. How the Law is ſaid to be the Strength of Sin. [*A Paſſion-Sermon.*]

1 Cor. xv. 56 and 57. *The ſting of Death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 491

SERM. LXXVII. How CHRIST has enabled us to conquer Sin. [*Preached on Eaſter-Day.*]

1 Cor. xv. 56 and 57. *The ſting of Death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 500

SERM. LXXVIII. How CHRIST has given us the Victory over Death. [*Preached on Eaſter-Day.*]

1 Cor. xv. 56, 57. *The ſting of Death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; But thanks be to God which giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 506

SERM. LXXIX. The Inexcuſableneſs of rejecting the Goſpel. [*Preached on Whitſunday.*]

Heb. ii. 3 and 4. *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own Will?* 514

SERM.

SERM. LXXX. Different Tempers judge differently of Religion. [*Preached on Easter-Day.*]

1 Cor. i. 22, 23, 24. *For the Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after Wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.* 521

SERM. LXXXI. Of the Resurrection of CHRIST. [*Preached on Easter-Day.*]

1 Cor. xv. 14. *And if Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith also is vain.* 527

SERM. LXXXII. Of CHRIST's Descent into Hell. [*Preached on Easter-Day.*]

Psal. xvi. 9, 10. *Wherefore my Heart was glad, and my glory rejoiced; my Flesh also shall rest in Hope. For why? Thou shalt not leave my Soul in Hell; neither shalt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.* 534

SERM. LXXXIII. Of CHRIST's sitting on the Right Hand of GOD. [*Preached on Ascension-Day.*]

Heb. viii. 1. *Now of the things which we have spoken, This is the Sum: We have such an High-Priest, who is set on the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens.* 540

SERM. LXXXIV. The Conversation of Christians is in Heaven. [*Preached on Ascension-Day.*]

Phil. iii. 20. *For our Conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* 540

SERM. LXXXV. Of the Spiritual Nature of the *Gospel*. [*Preached on Whitsunday.*]

2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. *Now the Lord is That Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty; But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* 553

SERMON

SERMON I.

Of FAITH in GOD.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without Faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe him: For he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.

SERM. I.

THE foregoing Chapter is a very earneſt and affectionate Exhortation to the Duty of *Faith*. Ver. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of Faith.* Ver. 23. *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our* Faith *without wavering.* Ver. 37. *For yet a little while, and he that ſhall come will come, and will not tarry: Now the juſt ſhall live by* Faith. That this exhortation might not be ineffectual, for want of men's clearly underſtanding *What* the *Nature* of the Duty was, to which they were here ſo earneſtly exhorted; the Apoſtle in the 1*ſt* verſe of This chapter, proceeds to define diſtinctly *what* Faith is, and wherein it conſiſts. *Faith*, ſaith he, *is the ſubſtance of things hoped for*, (in the original it is, *the firm and aſſured expectation* of things hoped for,) *the evidence of things not ſeen.* And *what* thoſe *Things* are, which being *not ſeen* by *Senſe*, are yet made manifeſt by *Faith*, he declares in the words of the Text. They are, ſaith he, the *Being of God*, and the *Rewards of the Life to come. He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* There has prevailed in *modern* times, a very different and enthuſiaſtick Notion of *Faith*; as if Faith, under the Goſpel, was nothing but a Confident Reliance upon the Merits of Chriſt, to do all That for us, which he on the contrary expreſly requires that we ſhould do for ourſelves. When we have heartily endeavoured to obey the Commandments of God; and have performed our Duty really and ſincerely, tho' very imperfect-

SERM. I.

ly; to rely *Then* upon the Merits and Interceſſion of Chriſt, for the acceptance of thoſe imperfect tho' ſincere Endeavours; This *is* indeed the *Duty*, and the *Comfort* of a Chriſtian; but it *is not* what the Scripture uſually calls *Faith*. *Faith*, is that firm Belief of things at preſent not ſeen; that conviction upon the Mind, of the Truth of the Promiſes and Threatnings of God made known in the Goſpel; of the certain Reality of the Rewards and Puniſhments of the Life to come; which enables a man, in oppoſition to all the Temptations of a corrupt World, to obey God in expectation of an inviſible Reward hereafter. This is that *Faith*, which in Scripture is always repreſented as a *moral Virtue*, nay as the *principal* moral Virtue, and the *root and ſpring* of all *other* Virtues; Becauſe it is an Act, not of the *Underſtanding* only, but alſo and chiefly of the *Will*, ſo to conſider impartially, to approve and embrace the Doctrine of the Goſpel, as to make it the great Rule of our Life and Actions. By *This Faith* it is, that *We* muſt be juſtified; and by *This* it is, that the *Antients*, whoſe example is celebrated in this xith chapter, *obtained*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *a good Report*. The Faith of *Abraham* was, that *he looked for a City which hath Foundations*, even the heavenly *Jeruſalem* ſpoken of in the Prophecies, *whoſe Builder and Maker is God*, ver. 10. The Faith of the *other Patriarchs* was that *confeſſing themſelves ſtrangers and pilgrims on the Earth*, they *declared plainly* that they *ſought a better Country*, that is, *an heavenly*, ver. 13, 16. The Faith of *Moſes* was, that he *choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of Sin for a ſeaſon*; For *he had reſpect unto the recompence of Reward*; and *endured, as ſeeing Him who is inviſible*, ver. 25, 26, 27. The Faith of the *Martyrs* was *that they choſe to be tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection*, ver. 35. This is a very eaſy and intelligible Notion of *Faith*; and ſuch a Notion, as ſhows plainly, how Faith is not a mere ſpeculative Act of the Underſtanding, but a ſubſtantial practical moral Virtue.

'Tis true; This is *not* indeed the *only* Senſe of the word, *Faith*, in Scripture; but 'tis the *Principal* and moſt *important* ſenſe of it. As may appear by conſidering, that all the Variety of ſignifications, in which the word is uſed in different places of Scripture, may properly be reduced, for memory and diſtinctneſs ſake, to theſe which follow. 1*ſt*. The word, *Faith*, in ſome Places ſignifies, That earneſt Truſt and Confidence in the Power of God, to which in the Apoſtles Times was annexed the Gift of working Miracles. Thus *Matt*. xvii. 20. *If ye have* Faith (ſays our Lord to his Apoſtles) *as a grain of Muſtard-ſeed*; (if ye have That *Truſt* in God, That particular *Kind* of Faith or Dependence on him, That aſſured Reliance on his Power without Doubt or wavering required of *you* peculiarly at *This time*; if you have *This Faith*, tho' ever ſo ſmall in compariſon, anſwerable in *any meaſure* to your preſent Office and Advantages;) *ye ſhall ſay to this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remove*. This, was a Faith required of the Apoſtles at *That particular* Time, and of *Them only*. 2*dly*, In other paſſages, the word, *Faith*, ſignifies the Duty of Veracity, Faithfulneſs, or Truth. Thus *Matt*. xxiii. 23. *Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the Law; judgment, mercy, and* Faith; Faith, that is *Fidelity*, *Truth*, or *Faithfulneſs*, in the diſcharge of any *Truſt* repoſed in Men. Analogous to which it is alſo ſometimes uſed for the *Truſt it ſelf*, or the *thing* committed to our charge; Thus *Rom*. xii. 6. *Having then Gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us; whether prophecy, let us propheſy according to the proportion of* Faith; *Or Miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtring*; [The phraſe in our modern language is very difficult, and cannot well be underſtood without This obſervation:] *According to the proportion of Faith*, that is, according to the nature and degree of the *Gift* or the *Truſt* repoſed in us, (whether it be *prophecy* or *miniſtration* or any other Office which requires *Faithfulneſs* in the performance of it,) ſo let every one of us diſcharge his reſpective Duty. 3*dly*, Another and much more uſual ſignification of the word, *Faith*; is to denote the *whole Goſpel of Chriſt*, or the *Chriſtian Religion*, in oppoſition to the ritual Works of the Law of *Moſes*. Thus *Acts* vi. 7. *The number of the Diſciples multiplied in Jeruſalem greatly, and a great company of the Prieſts were obedient to the* Faith; that is, embraced the *Goſpel*. Again, *Rom*. iii. 28. *A man is juſtified by Faith, without the deeds of the Law*; by *Faith*, that is, by the conditions of the *Goſpel*. And *Rom*. x. 8. *The word of* Faith, *which we preach*; That is to ſay, the Doctrine

of

of the *Gospel*. And indeed *generally* throughout all the *Epistles*, and in the Book of the *Acts*, this is the constant signification of the word, *Faith*. And the reason *why* the whole *Gospel* is so often expressed by that Name, is very obvious; [namely] because the great Motives and Promises of the Gospel, are *the invisible things of a Future State*, which can be discerned by *Faith* only. *4thly* and *Lastly*, in *other* places of Scripture, the word, *Faith*, signifies plainly and literally and in its most natural Sense, *a firm Belief* and *Persuasion*; a firm Belief of the *Being*, and *Attributes*, and *Promises* of God. Not, (as *Some* understand it,) a confident *Credulity* in they know not *what*, in whatever their Teachers require them to believe; and *That* perhaps with so much the greater Assurance, as the things are more absurd and unreasonable to be believed. Neither does *Faith* signify, (as *Others* have contended,) a groundless imaginary Assurance, and confident Reliance on our being unalterably, we know not *why*, in the Favour of God. But it is a rational Persuasion and firm Belief, of his Attributes discovered by *Nature*, and of his Promises made known in the *Gospel*; so as thereby to govern and direct our lives. Thus the word is used in the 1*st* verse of this chapter, *Faith is the Substance (a Substantial well-grounded expectation) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* And in the words of the Text; *Without Faith it is impossible to please God; For He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

To *come to God*, signifies, according to the Nature of the Jewish language, *making Profession of Religion*; undertaking to live a holy and virtuous Life, in obedience to God's commands, and in expectation of his Rewards. And it answers to another phrase of the like import, walking *with God*; which signifies *continuing and persevering* in that religious practice, whereof *coming to God* is the *Beginning or Entrance*. Thus *Gen.* v. 22. *Enoch* walked *with God*; and vi. 9. *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his Generation, and Noah* walked *with God*. *Walking with God*, is being *perfect* or *stedfast* in that religious course of Life, whereof *Coming to God*, is making the *first Profession*. He that *cometh to* God, is as much as to say, *whosoever will be a virtuous or religious man:* In like manner, as, he that *cometh to* Christ, signifies more particularly, *he that will take upon him to be a* Christian. *No man can* come to Me, says our Saviour, *Joh.* vi. 44. (that is, he cannot *become a good Christian,*) *except the* Father *which hath sent me, draw him*; ——— *Every Man that hath learned of the Father,* cometh unto Me. The phrase, *except the* Father *draw him*, is in our *present* manner of speaking, difficult and unusual; But it is explained by what follows, *He that hath* learned of the Father. The Meaning is: No man can effectually believe in *Christ*, except he first believes in *God*. *Natural* Religion, is the best Preparative for the reception of the *Christian*. The Love of Truth and *Virtue* in *general*, is the Dispensation of the *Father*; And the Doctrine of the *Gospel* in *particular*, is the Dispensation of the *Son*. Now as no man can receive *Christ*, who has not first heard, and is thus drawn by the *Father*; as no one can be a good *Christian*, who is not first resolved to be a good *Man*; so no one can hear the *Father*, can *come to God*, unless he first have *Faith*, and *believes in* Him. The Dispensation of the *Father*, That of Creation or Natural Religion, is a necessary Preparative for the Dispensation of the *Son*, that is, for the Gospel: And it must *it self* have *preparation made for it* by *Faith going before*, as by the *First Foundation of all*, *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

The Sense therefore of the Text is This. 'Tis in vain to make Profession of Religion, without being first well instructed and firmly perswaded of *This* Foundation; *the Being and Attributes of God.* There is no *Christian*, who is not well apprized of This; and may be apt to think perhaps, that 'tis needless to remind him of it. But there are few who consider these first Principles of Religion, so *seriously* and so *frequently* as they ought to do; and in *such* a manner, as to cause them to produce their proper Effect, by influencing their whole Lives and Conversations. For *Knowledge* is but a dormant Habit, if not excited by constant Meditation; and *Powers* are of no Use, if not produced into *Act*. Right Notions of the Being and Attributes of God, every one knows are the Foundation of all Religion: But then This Knowledge must not be a bare Speculation; but

SERM. I. a ſerious, practical, affecting impreſſion, and deep Senſe upon the Mind; of a Supreme Being, who created the World by his Power, preſerves and governs it by his Goodneſs and Wiſdom, and will judge it with Juſtice, Mercy, and Truth: Of *ſuch* a Supreme Being; whoſe Glory, no Eye can behold; whoſe Majeſty, no Thought can comprehend; whoſe Power, no Strength can reſiſt; from whoſe Preſence, no Swiftneſs can flee; from whoſe Knowledge, no Secret can be concealed; whoſe Juſtice, no Art can evade; whoſe Goodneſs, every Creature partakes of. This is That *Faith*, without which it is *impoſſible to pleaſe God*. It is *impoſſible* to pleaſe him without *it*; not that Virtue and Righteouſneſs, if it were poſſible to find them *without* Faith, could be in themſelves unacceptable to God; but that, becauſe *without* ſuch Faith there *can be no* Righteouſneſs, therefore neither without it can God poſſibly be pleaſed. *Righteouſneſs* is the only means, by which rational Beings can obtain the Favour of God; And therefore ſince *Faith* is neceſſary in order to Righteouſneſs, 'tis *conſequently* neceſſary to the obtaining of the Favour of God. He that will *pleaſe* God, muſt *come to him* in the Ways of Virtue and true Holineſs; and he that *cometh to God*, muſt firſt *believe that he is*.

From what has been ſaid upon This head, we may eaſily diſſipate the vain Fears of many pious and ſincere perſons, who are very apt to be ſuſpicious of themſelves that they want true *Faith*, and conſequently that their Religion is vain. Now this Fear, in ſuch Perſons, evidently ariſes from want of having a diſtinct Notion what *Faith* is. They are poſſeſſed of the *Thing*; but for want of clearly underſtanding the *Notion*, they are not able to judge rightly whether they have it or not. From the explication which has Now been given of that Matter, men may eaſily examine themſelves, whether they *have* that Faith, which I have been deſcribing, or no. And without entring into the *definition* at all, there is yet a plainer Rule given us by our Saviour; by its *Fruits* we may know it. Where-ever the *Fruits* of Righteouſneſs and true Virtue are found, *there* cannot be wanting the *Root* of Faith, from which thoſe Fruits proceed: For he that *cometh* to God, *does* certainly believe that he *is*; and gives the beſt Proof in the World that he does ſo. On the contrary, whoſoever upon examination finds not in his Life the Fruits of Righteouſneſs; whatſoever his *ſpeculative* Underſtanding may be, yet in the *Chriſtian* ſenſe he may be ſure he has no Faith. For if the Spring, the Cauſe, the active Principle were preſent; there would not be wanting its proper Effect. Such as the Root is, ſuch *will be* the Branches. He who ſeriouſly *believes* that God is, *will* endeavour to *come unto him*, in the ways of Truth and Righteouſneſs.

Having thus briefly explained the *former* part of the Words; and ſhewn both *what* Faith is, and how abſolutely *neceſſary*; as *without which* it is *impoſſible* to pleaſe God, or to come unto him; It remains that I conſider, in the *latter* part of the words, thoſe *Two* fundamental inſtances or primary *objects* of Faith, laid before us by the Apoſtle; namely, the *Being of God*, and his *Relation to* Us; that he *Is*, and that he is a *Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*. The firſt foundation of all, and the *primary* object of Faith, is the *Being* of God; *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he* Is. Now the *Grounds* or *Arguments*, upon which our Faith in *This particular* is built; beſides the Evidence and Authority of *Revelation*; are, from *Reaſon it ſelf*, and from the very *Nature of Things*, many and various: there being hardly any thing in Nature, from whence the Certainty of the Being of God, may not juſtly and reaſonably be deduced. Some of the Arguments are abſtruſe, and require Attention; but, when thoroughly conſidered, conclude moſt ſtrongly to the Conviction of obſtinate Unbelievers. Others are plain, eaſy, and obvious, ſuited to all Capacities; always ready at hand to confirm the Faith even of the meaneſt Underſtandings; and yet differing from the former not in *ſtrength*, but in being more *common only*. It would be tedious to repeat at length upon This Head a great Number of Arguments, among Chriſtians to whom they have been ſo often urged, and are ſo well underſtood. But by a brief recapitulation, to remind our ſelves frequently of things already known, for the better aſſiſting of our meditations; cannot but in many caſes be very uſeful. For *me*, ſaith St. *Paul*, to repeat unto you the *ſame* things, is not grievous, and for *You* it is ſafe. To this purpoſe, the numerous Arguments, which prove

(in

(in particular) *the* Being *of God*, may be naturally reduced to the *Two* which follow. SERM. I.

First, That 'tis evident, both We our ſelves, and all the other Beings we know in the World, are weak and dependent Creatures; which neither gave our ſelves Being, nor can preſerve it by any Power of our own: And that therefore we entirely owe our Being to ſome Superiour and more powerful Cauſe; which Superiour Cauſe, either muſt be it ſelf the *firſt Cauſe*, which is the Notion of *God*; or elſe, by the ſame Argument as before, muſt derive *from* him, and ſo lead us to the Knowledge *of* him. If it be ſaid, that we received our Being from our Fore-Fathers by a continued natural Succeſſion, (which however would not in any ſtep have been poſſible, without a perpetual Providence;) yet ſtill the Argument holds no leſs ſtrong concerning the *Firſt* of the whole Race; that *He* could not but be made by a Superiour Intelligent Cauſe. If an Atheiſt, contrary to the Truth of all Hiſtory, ſhall contend that there may have been, without any Beginning at all, an *eternal* Succeſſion of Men; yet ſtill it will be no leſs evident, that ſuch a perpetual Succeſſion could not have been without an eternal Superiour Cauſe; becauſe in the Nature of Things themſelves there is manifeſtly no *Neceſſity*, that any ſuch Succeſſion of tranſient Beings, either temporary or perpetual, ſhould have exiſted at all.

Secondly, The *other* Argument, to which the greateſt part of the Proofs of the Being of God may briefly be reduced, is the *Order* and *Beauty* of the World; That exquiſite Harmony of Nature, by which (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *Rom.* i. 20.) *the inviſible things of God from the creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made.* And This Argument, as it is infinitely ſtrong to the moſt accurate Philoſophers, ſo it is alſo ſufficiently obvious even to the meaneſt Capacities. *Whoſe* Power was it, that framed this beautiful and ſtately Fabrick, this immenſe and ſpacious World? *that ſtretched out the North over the empty place, and hanged the Earth upon nothing*? Job xxvi. 7. That formed thoſe vaſt and numerous Orbs of Heaven, and diſpoſed them into ſuch regular and uniform Motions? that appointed the Sun to rule the day, and the Moon and the Stars to govern the Night? that ſo adjuſted their ſeveral diſtances, as that they ſhould neither be ſcorched by Heat, nor deſtroyed by Cold? that encompaſſed the Earth with *Air* ſo wonderfully contrived, as at one and the ſame time to ſupport Clouds for Rain, to afford Winds for Health and Traffick, to be proper for the Breath of Animals by its Spring, for cauſing Sounds by its Motion, for tranſmitting Light by its tranſparency? that fitted the Water to afford Vapours for Rain, Speed for Traffick, and Fiſh for Nouriſhment and Delicacy? that weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance; and adjuſted them in their moſt proper Places for Fruitfulneſs and Health? that diverſified the Climates of the Earth into ſuch an agreeable Variety, that in that great Difference, yet each one has its proper Seaſons, Day and Night, Winter and Summer? that clothed the Face of the Earth with Plants and Flowers, ſo exquiſitely adorned with various and inimitable Beauties, that even *Solomon* in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them? that repleniſhed the World with Animals, ſo *different* from each other in *particular*, and yet All in the *whole* ſo much *alike*? that framed with exquiſite workmanſhip the Eye for Seeing, and other parts of the Body, neceſſarily in proportion; without which, no Creature could have long ſubſiſted? that beyond all theſe things, indued the *Soul of Man* with far ſuperiour Faculties; with Underſtanding, Judgment, Reaſon, and Will; with Faculties whereby in a moſt exalted manner *God teacheth us more than the Beaſts of the Field, and maketh us wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven*? Job xxxv. 11.

Pſ. civ. 2. Pſ. xix. 1. cxlvii. 4. Pſ. civ. 19.

'Tis commonly alledged by Unbelievers, that all theſe things are done by *Second* Cauſes. And ſuppoſe they *were*, (which however is not univerſally true: But ſuppoſe they *were* effected by Second cauſes,) yet *How* would *That* diminiſh the Neceſſity of acknowledging the *Firſt* Cauſe? If among *Men*, many things are performed by the Uſe of *Inſtruments*; are thoſe things therefore ever the leſs juſtly aſcribed to the *Hands* which *uſed* the Inſtruments? Becauſe every Wheel in a *Watch* moves only *naturally*, according to the Frame of its parts, and the Strength which the Spring impreſſes upon it; is therefore the Skill of the Workman the leſs to be acknowledged, who adjuſted thoſe very things? Or becauſe 'tis *natural*

SERM. I.

for the Wheels of a Watch, or for the Rooms of a Houſe, to be of ſuch particular Shapes and Dimenſions, does This make it poſſible, that therefore they may have been formed ſo without any Artificer? All *Natural*, All *Second* Cauſes, are nothing elſe, but either the *inanimate* Motions of ſenſeleſs Matter, or the *voluntary* Motions of dependent Creatures. And What are theſe, but *One* of them the direct Operation; and the *Other*, only the free Permiſſion, of Him who ruleth over all? Mens neglecting therefore to infer the Being of God, from every thing they ſee or think of every day, is in reality as great a ſtupidity as if from the conſtant and regular continuance of the *day-light*, men ſhould ceaſe to obſerve, that there is ſuch a thing as the *Sun* in the Heavens, from whence That Light proceeds. Nor would it be more abſurd to imagine, that the Light would continue, though the Sun, which cauſes it, were extinguiſhed; than that the Effects of Nature can regularly go on, without the Being of God who cauſes thoſe Effects. To evade this Argument there is no other poſſible way, but to affirm either that all things were produced by *Chance*, or that they are all *Eternal neceſſarily of themſelves*. As to *Chance*, 'tis evident That is nothing but a *mere Word*, or an *abſtract Notion* in our manner of conceiving things. It has it ſelf no real Being; it is Nothing, and can *do* nothing. Beſides, in the works of *God*, the *further* men ſearch, and the more diſcoveries they make, the greater *exactneſs* they conſtantly find; whereas in things done either by the Art of *Man*, or by what we call *Chance*, the *contrary* always is true; the *more* they are underſtood, the *leſs accurate* they appear. Beyond all credulity therefore is the credulouſneſs of Atheiſts, whoſe Belief is ſo abſurdly ſtrong, as to believe that Chance could make the *World*, when it cannot build a *Houſe*; that Chance ſhould produce all *Plants*, when it cannot paint one *Landskip*; that Chance ſhould form All *Animals*, when it cannot ſo much as make a *lifeleſs Watch*. On the other hand therefore, if they will affirm that all things are *eternal*; yet ſtill the Argument holds as ſtrong as before, that things which cannot for any *time* exiſt without a cauſe, can much leſs without a cauſe exiſt through all *time*. Unleſs they will affirm, that All things exiſt by an internal *abſolute Neceſſity in their own Nature*. Which that they do *not*, is evident from hence; that there exiſts in the World an infinite Diverſity of Things, whereas *Neceſſity* is *uniform and without Variation*.

Having thus briefly ſhown that God *Is*; it will eaſily follow in the *next* place, that he *is* and muſt be *a* Rewarder *of them that diligently ſeek him*. For he that governs the Motions of every even the ſmalleſt particle of *lifeleſs Matter*, and by whoſe Providence every *Vegetable* and every the meaneſt *Animal* is perpetually preſerved; without whom, not a *Sparrow* falls to the Ground; and with whom, even the very *hairs of our head* are all numbred; ſhall he not much more take care of *Us*, O We of little Faith? Now the proper and principal Care or Government over *Rational* Creatures, is the *Rewarding* or *Puniſhing* them according to their reſpective Deſerts. If therefore God *Is*, (as hath before been proved,) and is Governour of the World; it follows that he muſt be alſo, (Since therein principally all Government conſiſts; he muſt be) *a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*.

The Application of what has been ſaid, is briefly, 1*ſt*, to Scepticks, and 2*dly*, to Believers.

1*ſt*, To ſuch as are Scepticks or Unbelievers of the Being of God, 'tis adviſeable in the firſt place, that they conſider how *uncomfortable* their Opinion is. 'Tis plain, ſuch is the condition of human Nature in This Life, that we are continually ſurrounded with *Evils* which we cannot *prevent*, with *Wants* which we are not able to *ſupply*, with *Infirmities* which we cannot *remove*, with *Dangers* which we can no way *eſcape*. Our *injoyments* are ſuch, as are *not* for one moment *ſecure*; our *expectations*, of ſuch things as are *not in our own Power to accompliſh*. We are apt to *grieve*, for things we *cannot help*; and to be tormented with *Fears*, of what we *cannot prevent*. And in all theſe caſes, there is no ſubſtantial Comfort, but in the Belief of God; and in the ſingular Satisfaction of having Him our Friend. Had the thing therefore really in it ſelf any *Uncertainty*, (which is by no means the caſe,) yet it could not but be what every wiſe and reaſonable man muſt *deſire* and *wiſh* might be true, that the World were governed by a wiſe and juſt and merciful God. So that even *Scepticks themſelves* cannot but be ſelf-condemned, when they *mock* and *ſcoff* at Religion; when they refuſe to hear Arguments for the Truth

Quid habet ea res lætabile aut glorioſum?

Truth of the moſt deſirable thing in the World; and will not examine thoſe Evi- SERM. I.
dences and Proofs of Religion, which are really much ſtronger than theſe perſons can before-hand imagine. And if the Proofs were much *weaker* than they are, yet they would deſerve at leaſt to be ſeriouſly *conſidered*; becauſe the hazard on one ſide is infinitely great, if Religion which they reject, be true; whereas on the other ſide there is no hazard at all, if, being received as true, it could poſſibly prove to be a miſtake.

2*dly*, To ſincere Believers, the Uſe of what has been ſaid, is; that being once ſatisfied in the *main and great* Truths of Religion, they ſuffer not themſelves to be moved, and their Faith in this *Great* Point, ſhaken, by nice and uncertain diſputes about particular Queſtions of leſs moment. For, which way ſoever many ſuch controverſies of an abſtruſe and difficult Nature, be determined; yet the great Foundation of Religion, upon which a Wiſe Man may always act ſteddily, is laid deep and ſure in this plain Propoſition, that *God Is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.*

SERMON

SERMON II.

Of the UNITY of GOD.

MATT. iv. 10. latter part.

Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and Him only ſhalt thou ſerve.

SERM. II.

THE Practice of True Religion, conſiſts principally in Two Great Branches; giving *Honour* to *God*, and doing *Good* to *Men*. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*; *This* (ſays our Saviour) *is the firſt and great Commandment: And the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* Under this *Second* Branch, the Duty of *Loving our* Neighbour or *Doing Good to Men*; are comprehended likewiſe thoſe Duties which more particularly reſpect mens *Selves*, ſuch as are *Sobriety*, *Temperance*, *Humility*, and the like. The *former* Branch, the Duty of *loving* God *with our whole Heart*, is by our Saviour expreſſed in *Other* words in the *Text* now read unto you, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and Him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* In diſcourſing upon which important Words, I ſhall obſerve the following Method. *1ſt*, I ſhall conſider the *Suppoſition* laid down in the Text; that there is *One*, and *One Only*, True *God* or Supreme *Lord* of all things; *The Lord thy God*. *2dly*, I ſhall ſhew *What* That *Duty* towards him is, which is expreſſed in *theſe* words, *Thou ſhalt* worſhip *the Lord thy God*. And *3dly*, it being added, *Him* Only *ſhalt thou ſerve*; I ſhall thence take occaſion to explain diſtinctly, the nature of the ſeveral Species of *Idolatry*: Which conſiſts, either in ſetting up *Idol-Gods*, in oppoſition to, or in conjunction with, the True God; or in worſhipping the *True God himſelf*, after an *idolatrous manner*; either repreſenting him under viſible and corporeal *Images*, or applying to him through falſe and *Idol-Mediators*, in diminution of the Honour of the One *True Mediator*, whom God himſelf has expreſly appointed to be Alone our Advocate, Interceſſor, and Judge. The

I. *1ſt*. Thing to be obſerved, is the *Suppoſition* laid down in the Text; that there is *One*, and *One Only*, True *God* or Supreme *Lord* of all things; *The Lord thy God*. One *God*: That is, One Eternal and Infinite, One Supreme and Independent, One All powerful and All-wiſe, One perfectly Juſt and Merciful and Good Being. The God who created all things for his Own good pleaſure, and on whoſe Will depends every Moment the continuance of their Being: *By the word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Hoſt of them by the Breath of his Mouth*, Pſ. xxxiii. 6. The God by whoſe Providence every thing is governed, ſo that *without him not a Sparrow falls to the ground*, but even the *very hairs of our head are all numbred*, Mat. x. 29. The God who *hath made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the times before-appointed, and the bounds of their habitation*, Acts xvii. 26. The God who, in times paſt, particularly manifeſted himſelf to *our Fathers*, to *Abraham*, *Iſaac and Jacob*, and the Patriarchs: Who brought the *children of Iſrael* out of *Egypt*,

Egypt, with an high hand, and with an out-ſtretched Arm: Who, delivered the *Law* to *Moſes*: Who, in a Succeſſion of Ages, inſtructed his people from time to time by the *Prophets*: and who, in theſe *laſt days*, hath *ſpoken unto us by his ſon*. According to That declaration of St. *Peter*; in his diſcourſe to the *Jews*, Acts iii. 13. *The God of Abraham, and of Iſaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers, hath glorified his Son Jeſus:* And That of St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. i. 3. *God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all comfort*; and ch. xi. 31. *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which is Bleſſed for evermore.* SERM. II.

This Doctrine, of the whole World being under the Government of *One God*, is the *Natural* Notion, which the Light of *Reaſon it ſelf* has univerſally implanted in the Minds of Men. And had not perſons of vain and conceited Imaginations, *profeſſing themſelves Wiſe, become Fools*: Had not Men of corrupt Manners, *diſliking to retain God in their knowledge*, and having *their fooliſh heart darkned*; Deifying the Souls of their *deceaſed* Kings, out of Flattery to the *Living*; filled the minds of the ignorant and deluded Vulgar, with a ſuperſtitious Belief of many Gods having Rule over particular Places and Countries; The True Notion of God, ſo agreeable to the plain and natural Dictates of unprejudiced Reaſon, might well have been preſerved among the Nations of the Earth. For the plain connexion, and dependence of one thing upon another, through the whole material Univerſe; through all parts of the Earth, and in the viſible Heavens; The Diſpoſition of the Air, and Sea, and Winds; The Motions of the Sun, and Moon, and Stars; and the uſeful Viciſſitudes of Seaſons, for the regular production of the various Fruits of the Earth; have always been ſufficient to make it evidently appear even to *mean* Capacities, (had they not been perpetually prejudiced by wrong Inſtruction,) that all things are under the Direction of *One* Power, under the Dominion of *One* God, to whom the whole Univerſe is uniformly ſubject. And in fact, notwithſtanding the ſtrongeſt Prejudices of long-eſtabliſhed Superſtitions and inforced Idolatry, yet the *wiſeſt and beſt Men*, in All *heathen-nations*, have ever ſeen and in good meaſure maintained this Great Truth; as a Teſtimony to a degenerate and corrupt World, that God never *left himſelf* wholly without *Witneſs*, notwithſtanding all the provocations of Idolaters; but continually manifeſted himſelf to all reaſonable Underſtandings, *in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful Seaſons, filling our hearts with Food and Gladneſs*. But 'tis with greater *Clearneſs* from all appearance of Doubt, and with greater Aſſurance of *Authority* confirming the Dictate of Reaſon, that the *Scripture* ſets forth to us This Firſt Principle of Religion. *Deut.* vi. 4. *Hear, O Iſrael, The Lord our God is One Lord*; [ch. iv. 39.] *He is God in Heaven above, and upon the Earth beneath; there is none elſe.* Again, *Iſ.* xliv. 6. *I am the Firſt, and I am the Laſt, and beſides me there is no God*; [---- *Is there a God beſides me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.*] And in the New Teſtament, 1 *Cor.* viii. 4. *We know ---- that there is none other God but One: For though there be that are* called *Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth* (*as there be Many Gods*;) *yet to Us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and One Lord* (that is, One Mediator,) *Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things, and we by Him.* This is the *Firſt* thing I propoſed to conſider; The *Suppoſition* laid down in the Text, that there is *One*, and *One Only* True *God*, or Supreme *Lord* of all things; *The Lord thy God.*

II. 2*dly*, I am to ſhew in the *next* place, *What* that *Duty* towards him is, which is expreſſed *in theſe* words; *Thou ſhalt* worſhip *the Lord thy God.* And here the word, *Worſhip*, muſt be underſtood in its largeſt Extent; to ſignify every religious, every virtuous Act or Habit, by which Regard is ſhown to God, either in the *Affections* of our *Mind*, or in the *Expreſſions* of our *Mouths*, or in the *Actions* of our *Life*.

1*ſt*, The *Worſhip* of God, as it denotes That Regard we are to bear to him in the *Affections* of our *Minds*, implies, as the Firſt Ground and Foundation of All, a firm belief of his *Being:* For *he that cometh to God, muſt* firſt *believe that he Is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* That is: Our Belief of his Exiſtence, muſt not be a careleſs ſpeculative acknowledgment of him, barely as a Being infinitely perfect in himſelf; but it muſt be a ra-

SERM. II.

tional, conſiderate, and practical perſwaſion, firmly impreſſed and fixed upon our Minds, of his being truly and literally the original Author, and the continual Preſerver, Governor, Director and Ruler of the Univerſe, and of all things that are therein, by his immediate, real, living, active Preſence, Authority and Dominion; in oppoſition to all ſceptical Notions concerning blind *Chance*, or unintelligent *Fate*. From ſuch a Belief as This, of the Being of God; there *will* ariſe juſt and worthy Notions of his Perfections and Attributes. And a juſt Senſe, and due Conſideration, of each of his Perfections reſpectively; *will* naturally excite in us That conſtant and proper Regard towards him in the correſpondent Affections of our Mind, or That internal habitual Honour and Senſe of Duty towards him, which, to Him who ſees the Heart, is the moſt valuable and acceptable part of Worſhip. In *This* Senſe therefore, the Worſhip, This internal Worſhip of God, includes the following particulars, and Others of the like nature. It implies our *fearing* his *Power*; ſo as to be much more ſollicitous not to offend *Him*, than to fall under the Diſpleaſure of any *Other* Perſon whatſoever: According to That Admonition of our Saviour, *Fear not them which kill the Body, and after That have no more that they can do; But I will forewarn you, whom ye ſhall fear; Fear Him, who, after he has killed, hath power to caſt into Hell; yea, I ſay unto you, Fear him.* It implies our *revering* and ſtanding in awe of His *Juſtice*; who, as *Moſes* deſcribes him, is a *Great God, mighty and terrible, which regardeth not perſons, nor taketh Reward:* or, as 'tis expreſſed in the book of *Job*, ch. xxxiv. 19. *He accepteth not the Perſons of Princes, nor regardeth the Rich more than the Poor; for they are All the work of His hands.* It implies, our *Truſting* and *Relying* upon his *Faithfulneſs* and *Veracity*, in all caſes of Difficulty and Diſtreſs whatſoever; that, how little appearance ſoever there may be, in the *preſent* State of the World, that *Truth* and *Righteouſneſs* ſhould prevail, yet the Hope of thoſe things, which *God, who cannot lie*, hath promiſed ſince the World began, ſtands for ever firm and unſhaken: So that 'tis with great reaſon, as well as with noble eloquence, that the prophet *Habakkuk* expreſſes himſelf, ch. iii. 17. *Altho' the Fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall Fruit be in the Vines; tho' the labour of the Olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; tho' the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no Herd in the Stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* The *Laſt* inſtance I ſhall mention of the Particulars, wherein conſiſts the *Internal Worſhip* of God, or the proper Regard we are to bear to him in the *Affections* of our *Minds*, is That of *Loving* him for his *Goodneſs*. *Goodneſs*, is the Proper Motive and Object of *Love*: And therefore, as, comparatively ſpeaking, *there is none* Good, *but One, that is God*; He being the Alone Author of every good thing we enjoy: ſo He alone likewiſe, comparatively ſpeaking, is conſequently the Proper Object of *Love*. By which *Love towards God*, we ought always carefully to obſerve, is Never meant That Enthuſiaſtick Warmth of Imagination, which is the eſſential character of *Fanaticiſm*; but (which is the juſt and proper Affection of a rational Creature towards its beneficent Author,) 'tis a *Deſire* of *pleaſing* him, a *Deſire* of performing his Will, a *Deſire* of being acceptable to him, a *Deſire* of partaking of his Favour and Rewards, rather than of the unreaſonable Pleaſures of Unrighteouſneſs. This is the True Notion of *Loving God*. From whence, by the way, it clearly appears, that the Love of *Virtue* and *Truth*, the Love of *Righteouſneſs* and *Goodneſs*, is truly and indeed Loving of *God*. From hence alſo at the ſame time 'tis very manifeſt, that mens doing their Duty with a Hope and Proſpect of *Future Rewards*, is not (as ſome have ridiculouſly argued,) a Mercenary Temper. For the Rewards which God has promiſed to them that love and obey him, are of ſuch a Nature, as either themſelves conſiſt in, or are eſſentially conjoined with, the Perfection of *Virtue*. The Rewards prepared for Them who ſhall be thought worthy to obtain That Life and the Reſurrection from the Dead, are new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth *righteouſneſs*, 2 *Pet.* iii. 13; where the *People ſhall be All righteous*, Iſ. lx. 21; in the City of God, whereinto *there ſhall in no wiſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whoſoever worketh abomination, or maketh a Lie*, Rev. xxi. 27. There is a Reward, the Proſpect and Deſire whereof, in the performance of our Duty, is no Diminution from the moſt exalted Love of *God*, or even of *Virtue* for Virtue's ſake; but is indeed the very ſame thing, or entirely coincident with, the

Deut. x. 17.

the Love of Virtue and the Love of God. For which reaſon, not only *Moſes*, SERM. who, *when he was come to years, refuſed to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter; chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon; Eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater Riches than the Treaſures in Egypt*; not only *Moſes*, I ſay, is in Scripture recorded, without any mark of Blame, to have *had Reſpect*, in all this, *to the Recompence of Reward*, Heb. xi. 26; and *Abraham*, that he *looked for a City which hath Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*, ver. 10. and the Martyrs of old, that they endured what they did, in hopes of *obtaining a better Reſurrection*, ver. 35: But even of our *Saviour himſelf* 'tis expreſly affirmed, ch. xii. 2. that *for the Joy which was ſet before him, he endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the Shame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Throne of God.*

II.

2*dly*, The *worſhipping the Lord our God*, as it denotes primarily That *Internal* Regard we are to bear towards him in the *Affections of our Minds*; ſo it implies likewiſe, in the *next* place, our making ſuitable *Confeſſion* with our *Mouths*, Rom. x. 10. *With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth Confeſſion is made unto Salvation.* For 'tis our Duty, not only to have a conſtant Senſe of God upon our own *Minds*, but to *honour* him alſo *before men*, and to promote the Knowledge of *Him* and his *Truth* in the World. And This Obligation, includes *Many* Particulars. The firſt and moſt obvious, is our obligation to *make profeſſion* of the *True Religion*, how detrimental ſoever ſuch profeſſion may prove to our preſent temporal Intereſt. This is the Foundation of all the Slanders and Calumnies, of all the Reproaches and Perſecutions, which the beſt and moſt virtuous men have in all Ages and in all Nations ſuffered, upon account of their adhering to the Cauſe of Truth and Righteouſneſs. *Whoſoever*, ſays our Saviour, *ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in Heaven: But whoſoever ſhall deny Me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in Heaven*, Matt. x. 32. And ſtill more diſtinctly, *Mark* viii. 38. *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of Me and of my Words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the Holy Angels.* This therefore is the firſt and principal Inſtance of *Confeſſing God* with our *Mouths*; The making conſtant *Profeſſion* of the True Doctrine of Religion, how much ſoever we may poſſibly ſuffer thereby in our temporal Intereſt. Nor need I here to have added the word, *poſſibly*; Since indeed it can ſcarce poſſibly be otherwiſe, but that mens ſtedfaſtly adhering to what is True and Right, will always be more or leſs hurtful to their Temporal Intereſt. For though *in the general*, the Profeſſion of Chriſtian Religion does not now expoſe men to perſecution, as in the Apoſtles Days; but on the contrary, Chriſtianity is in ſome Countries publickly ſupported and encouraged: yet in the *particular* circumſtances of life, ſuch is the Ignorance and Superſtition, ſuch the Prejudices, Paſſions, and Animoſities of Men; that whoſoever will not ſuffer himſelf to be ſwayed, according to the Cuſtoms of a corrupt Age, by Other Arguments than thoſe of Truth and Right; will certainly loſe very many Advantages; and perhaps be deſpiſed and ill-ſpoken of for ſo doing: *yea, and* All *that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus*, ſays the Apoſtle, ſhall *ſuffer perſecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. *Next* therefore to the *Profeſſion* of true Religion in *general*, there is *further* implied in this Duty of *Confeſſing God with our Mouths*, an obligation not to be aſhamed of *Truth and Right*, of *Virtue* and *Goodneſs*, in all *particular* Caſes wherein they may happen to be conteſted. St. *Paul*, as he declared in *general*, that he was *not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt*, Rom. i. 16; ſo, when in a *particular circumſtance* he judged St. *Peter* to have departed from the Simplicity of the Goſpel, he *withſtood him to the Face*, Gal. ii. 11. And 'tis accordingly excellent Advice which is given by the Son of *Sirach*, Ecclus. iv. 20. *Beware of Evil, and be not aſhamed when it concerns thy Soul: For there is a ſhame that bringeth Sin, and there is a ſhame which is glory and grace: Accept no perſon againſt thy Soul, and let not thy Reverence of any man cauſe thee to fall: Refrain not to ſpeak, when there is occaſion to do good; ſtrive for the Truth unto death, and the Lord ſhall fight for thee.* Promoting ſteddily the Intereſt of Truth and Virtue, is making confeſſion of *God*, who is the Author of Truth, and whoſe Glory and Honour is the eſtabliſhment of Virtue and Righteouſneſs. In theſe things conſiſts the Kingdom of God; in theſe conſiſts the excellency of rational Creatures: And when men of corrupt minds deſpiſe

every

SERM. II.

every thing as Folly and Enthuſiaſm, that happens not to ſerve the Intereſts of Covetouſneſs and Ambition; *then* to adhere ſtedfaſtly to Truth and Virtue, notwithſtanding all the Contempt that may be caſt upon them, is what our Saviour calls, *not being aſhamed of Him, and of his words, in an adulterous and perverſe generation.* The remaining particulars included in this Duty of *confeſſing God with our mouths*, are, *ſpeaking honourably* of him, or reverencing his Name, in all *private* converſation; and paying him Solemn *Worſhip* in *publick*. And *Theſe* Inſtances of Duty, will not eaſily be neglected by Such perſons, whoſe Minds have made natural to themſelves the fore-mentioned Habits of Virtue. For in like manner as our Saviour argues in Another caſe, *Mark* ix. 39. *There is no man which ſhall do a Miracle in my Name, that can lightly ſpeak evil of Me;* ſo here likewiſe, there is no man who habitually loves *Truth and Virtue*, that can eaſily ſpeak diſhonourably of *God*, the Supreme Good, or lightly take his Name in vain, or that will not take pleaſure in promoting his *Publick Honour* and *Worſhip*. But,

3*dly*, and laſtly: The *Worſhip* of God, as it denotes the Regard we are to bear to him in the *Affections* of our *Minds*, and in the *Expreſſions* of our *Mouths*; ſo it includes likewiſe, and That principally and chiefly, the Honour we are to pay him in all the *Actions* of our *Lives*. It includes This, I ſay, *principally* and *chiefly*. For, worſhipping God with our *Lips*, unleſs accompanied with Obedience in our *Lives*, is nothing more than a Solemn Hypocriſy, and is an Abomination before God. And the Regard we bear to him in the Affections of our *Minds*, can by This only Proof be ſhown, either to Others or to Ourſelves, to be real and ſincere; if it cauſes us to *imitate* him, and to endeavour to *pleaſe* him, by a *Life* of *Virtue* and *true Holineſs*. For by the *Fruit* only, as our Saviour directs, can we poſſibly make a right judgment of the Goodneſs of the *Tree*. The Sacrifice therefore *moſt acceptable* unto God, is that which St. *Paul* elegantly ſtiles, *Rom.* xii. 1, *the preſenting* Our ſelves *a* Living *Sacrifice, Holy, acceptable unto God, which is our Reaſonable Service. Other* things are not to be left undone, and the *external* Worſhip of God is by no means to be neglected; But the *End* and Great Deſign of All, is the uniform Practice of *Virtue and Righteouſneſs*, in the whole Courſe of our Lives. In all *comparative* Speaking, *Behold, to* obey, *is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams:* Or, as it is expreſſed by the Scribe, whom our Lord commends, in the Goſpel, *Mark* xii. 33. *To love God with all the Heart,---- and his Neighbour as himſelf, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and Sacrifices.*

And now, having thus largely and diſtinctly explained, [1*ſt* the *Suppoſition* laid down in the Text; that there is *One*, and *One Only*, True *God* or Supreme *Lord* of all things; and 2*dly*, *What* That *Duty* towards him is, which is expreſſed in] *theſe* words, *Thou ſhalt* worſhip *the Lord thy God:* I ſhould in the

III. Next place, from the following words, *And him* Only *ſhalt thou ſerve*, have proceeded to explain the nature of the ſeveral Species of *Idolatry:* Which is the Great Breach of this fundamental Commandment. But the Time will not permit me to enter upon the Conſideration of This matter, till a further opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON III.

Of the UNITY of GOD.

MATT. iv. 10. latter part.

Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and Him only ſhalt thou ſerve.

SERM. III.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe important words of our Saviour; I propoſed, 1*ſt*, to conſider the *Suppoſition* laid down in the Text; that there is *One*, and *One Only*, True *God* or Supreme *Lord* of all things; *The Lord thy God*. 2*dly*, To ſhow *What* That Duty towards him is, which is expreſſed in *theſe* words, *Thou ſhalt* worſhip *the Lord thy God*. And 3*dly*, it being added, *Him Only ſhalt thou ſerve*, from thence I propoſed to take an occaſion of explaining diſtinctly, the nature of the ſeveral Species of *Idolatry*: Which is the Great Breach of this fundamental Commandment.

The two Former of theſe Heads I have already gone through; Having largely ſhown, that there is *One*, and *One Only*, True *God*, or Supreme *Lord* of all things; ſtiled here by our Saviour, *The Lord thy God*: And that our *Duty* towards him, expreſt in *Theſe* words, *Thou ſhalt* worſhip *the Lord thy God:* denotes every religious, every virtuous Act or Habit, by which Regard is ſhown to God, either in the *Affections* of our *Minds*, or in the *Expreſſions* of our *Mouths*, or in the *Actions* of our *Lives*.

It remains, that I proceed at this time from the latter part of the Text, *And Him* Only *ſhalt thou ſerve*, to explain diſtinctly the Nature of the ſeveral Species of Idolatry. Which Sin conſiſts, either in ſetting up *Idol-Gods*, in oppoſition to, or in conjunction with, the True God; or in worſhipping the *True God himſelf*, after an *idolatrous manner*; either repreſenting him under viſible and corporeal *Images*, or applying to him through falſe and *Idol-Mediators*, in diminution of the Honour of the One *True Mediator*, whom God himſelf has expreſly appointed to be Alone our Advocate, Interceſſor, and Judge.

1. The *Firſt* and Higheſt Degree of Idolatry is, when men totally caſting off all Belief of the True God, ſet up, in direct *oppoſition* to Him, ſome imagination of their own, it not as a formal Object of Worſhip, yet at leaſt as That to which Alone they aſcribe all thoſe great Effects, which are indeed the bountiful Gifts of God to Mankind, and the ſovereign Benefits of his Government over the World. Of This kind are the Notions which Some men frame to themſelves, of *Nature*, *Fate*, *Chance*, and the like; when they aſcribe the Being and Order, the Beauty and Uſefulneſs of the World and all things that are therein, to theſe as their real Cauſes; which in Truth are nothing but mere empty words, mere abſtract Notions, mere Fictions or *Idols* of the Imagination, which have no real Exiſtence, or (as St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf in a like caſe) are *Nothing in the World*. For, What

SERM. III.

is *Nature?* What is *Fate*, or *Chance?* Are they any real Beings, or Agents? or can That be truly the Cauſe of any thing, which itſelf has really no ſubſiſtence? or are not theſe Notions plainly the mere Refuges of Ignorance, and the thin Cover of affected Perverſeneſs? Leſs unreaſonable of the two, were thoſe antient Idolaters, who ſtopping ſhort at the immediate and viſible Cauſes of the Life and Food and Plenty they injoyed, worſhipped the Sun and Moon and Stars of Heaven, as the *Authors* of That Good, whereof they were really and undeniably the *Inſtruments*. Leſs unreaſonable, I ſay, was even *This*, than to attribute the cauſes of all things, to the efficiency of a mere abſtract Nothing. And yet the worſhipping theſe glorious and moſt noble parts of the viſible Univerſe, was a Folly altogether without Excuſe, even in the darkeſt Times of heathen-ignorance; Becauſe Reaſon itſelf, without Any Revelation, was abundantly ſufficient to lead men from the wonderful operations of unintelligent and lifeleſs Matter, to the Knowledge of an Intelligent, Living, and All-wiſe Cauſe. For, *the inviſible things of God from the creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead*, Rom. i. 20. So that *Job* (who appears not to have had any knowledge of the Jewiſh Religion) could ſay: *If I beheld the Sun when it ſhined, or the Moon walking in brightneſs; and my Heart hath been ſecretly inticed, or my mouth hath kiſſed my hand: This alſo were an iniquity to be puniſhed by the judge; for I ſhould have denied the God that is above.* Which natural knowledge of God, when men had *once* ſuffered to be corrupted; and had *changed the Truth of God into a Lye, worſhipping and ſerving the Creature inſtead of the Creator, who is Bleſſed for ever*; Idolatry quickly ſpread itſelf into *Many Branches*: And as Some worſhipped the Hoſt of Heaven, the Sun and Moon and Stars, becauſe of their Beauty and Uſefulneſs; ſo others, carried away with Flattery towards their Kings and Governors, deified and worſhipped, after their Deaths, thoſe who in their life-time, for exerciſing Lordſhip over them, had been ſtiled Benefactors. This latter was the Idolatry of the Antient *Greeks* and *Romans*; thoſe *Learned* Nations, who in all *other* reſpects improved and civilized themſelves to ſuch a degree, and cultivated all Arts and Sciences to ſo high a Pitch, that all Countries in the World, in compariſon of *Them*, were ſtiled and juſtly accounted *barbarous*. But their *Religion*, theſe Learned and Famous Nations received in the blindeſt and moſt ſtupid manner, by Tradition from their ignorant and barbarous Anceſtors; their *Jupiter* himſelf, the Object of their moſt ſolemn Worſhip, being no other than a *King*, who, in the antient dark and fabulous Ages, had reigned in the Iſle of *Crete*. Of the ſame kind, ſeems to have been the idolatry of the *Chaldeans*, at the time when *Abram*, in order to ſet up the worſhip of the True God, departed *out of his country, and from his Kindred, and from his Father's houſe*, Gen. xii. 1. And afterwards in the kingdom of Iſrael, *Baal*; concerning whom we find *Elijah* thus ſpeaking to the people; *If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him*; This *Baal* (I ſay) was no other than [*Belus*] an antient King of *Aſſyria*, whoſe Worſhip *Ahab* had eſtabliſhed in ſuch direct oppoſition to the Worſhip of the *God of Heaven*.

2. The *next* Species of Idolatry, is when men ſet up Falſe Gods, not indeed totally in *excluſion of*, but in *conjunction with* the Worſhip of the One True God of the Univerſe. Of *This* kind was the idolatry of thoſe *Heathens*, who though they knew and acknowledged the True God, from that Light of Nature and Reaſon and the Works of Creation, which the before-mentioned more ſtupid Idolaters had no regard to; yet at the ſame time they worſhipped alſo many Other imaginary Deities, as *Parts* or *Branches* or particular *Manifeſtations* of the Supreme Being, in particular *Places* or upon particular *occaſions*. Not much unlike to which, was the Practice of thoſe *Samaritans*, 2 *Kings* xvii. 33 and 41. who *feared the* Lord, *and* yet at the ſame time, as the Text tells us, *ſerved* alſo *their* own *Gods after the Manner of the Nations*. Under the ſame Head, may be reduced the opinion of the *Syrians* in *Ahab*'s time; who fancied that different parts of the World, were under the dominion and government of different Gods: Concerning whom we read, 1 *Kings* xx. 28, that *the Syrians ſaid, The Lord is God of the Hills, but he is not God of the Vallies*. Laſtly, of the ſame kind was the idolatrous notion of the *Manichees* in later times, even ſince the times of the Goſpel; who taught that *Good* proceeded from a Supreme Almighty *Good* Being, and that at the ſame time *Evil* proceeded from another equally Supreme All-powerful *Evil* Being.

Habentes phantaſma idololatriæ, *ſays Irenæus of the Valentinian Emanations.*

3. A

3. A *Third* Sort or Degree of Idolatry, is, when men worſhip indeed the *True God, and Him* Only, but yet after an *idolatrous Manner*; repreſenting him under *viſible and corporeal Images*. God is a *ſpiritual* Being; a Being of infinite *Greatneſs, Power* and *Majeſty*; whom the Heavens, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain. And 'tis the greateſt indignity imaginable to conceive, that he who *made the World and all things that are therein*, who *giveth unto All Life and Breath*, and whoſe *Offſpring* (or the *Work of whoſe hands*) even *Men* and all rational *Spirits* are, ſhould himſelf be *like unto* (or can be repreſented by) *gold, or ſilver, or ſtone, graven by Art and Man's Device*. And therefore 'tis with great Juſtice that St. *Paul* reproves even the Heathen-*world*, in that, *when they knew God* by the Light of Nature and Reaſon, yet, contrary to reaſon, they *changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beaſts, and creeping things*, Rom. i. 23. To the *Jews*, God, in the *Second Commandment*, confirmed this Law of Nature, by a literal and expreſs prohibition, that they ſhould not make to themſelves any image or repreſentation of *him*, under the ſimilitude of any creature whatſoever; of any thing either in the *Heavens, Earth*, or *Water*; of Sun, Moon, or Stars; of *Men, Beaſts*, or *Fiſhes*. To repreſent God, the inviſible Author of all Good, under the likeneſs of thoſe moſt *excellent* of all the viſible parts of the creation, thoſe moſt *beneficial* inſtruments and conveyers of his Bleſſings to Mankind, the *Sun, Moon*, and *Stars*; which in Scripture is called *worſhipping the Hoſt of Heaven*: To *This*, I ſay, one *may poſſibly* conceive, how in the days of ignorance there *might be* ſome Temptation: And therefore, not without very apparent reaſon, the Scripture is diſtinct and particular, in ſetting forth how all theſe things were brought into Being, *merely* by *His* Will and Power; that for *His* pleaſure *alone* they *Are, and were created*; that the *Heavens* are *the Work of* His *hands*, and that 'tis His *Sun that ſhineth on the evil and on the good*. Alſo, *Man* being the Lord of this lower world; that weak minds ſhould be tempted to repreſent God under a *Human* ſimilitude, *This* likewiſe may eaſily be accounted for. But that any one ſhould ever be *ſo abſurd*, as to repreſent the Almighty Lord and Father of the Univerſe, under the likeneſs of *Birds, and Beaſts, and creeping things*; This is a degree of ſtupidity that would be altogether incredible, did not *profane hiſtory* aſſure us of the Folly of the *Egyptians* in this kind, and the *ſacred hiſtory* give us a very particular Account how the *Jews themſelves* in the wilderneſs *changed their glory into the ſimilitude of a calf that eateth hay*; ſaying, This *is the God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt*, and *proclaiming a Feaſt* to it under the Sacred Name of *Jehovah*; And *Jeroboam*, in after times, cauſed *Iſrael to ſin* again the ſame Sin, by ſetting up Calves in *Dan* and *Bethel*, as Repreſentatives of the God of Heaven, who had commanded himſelf to be worſhipped without any Image in the Temple of *Jeruſalem*. Nay, even after the greater Light of the *Goſpel*; Chriſtians, as they ſtile themſelves, in the Church of *Rome*, have not been a whit behind the groſſeſt antient Idolaters, in their corruptions of This kind; making Pictures and Images of the Inviſible God, even of the Father Almighty, in expreſs oppoſition to the Second Commandment. And in the matter of Tranſubſtantiation; fancying the elements to be changed into the Body of Chriſt, and knowing the Body of Chriſt to be in union with his Divinity, and his Divinity to be in union with that of his Father; from hence, by three or four ſteps of multiplied idolatry, they pay to the mere elements of bread and wine, That Worſhip which indeed is due only to the God and Father of All, even to Him who *ſo loved the* World, *as to give his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life*. In which and the like caſes, an unaccountable Tyranny has for many Ages compelled Learned men to employ their whole skill and abilities, not in getting a right underſtanding of things, but in defending implicitly what ignorant and unlearned Perſons had decided for them before.

Acts xvii. 29.

4. Another *Kind* or *Species* of *Idolatry*, is when Men apply themſelves to God through *Falſe* and *Idol Mediators*, in diminution of the Honour of the *One True Mediator*, whom God himſelf has expreſly appointed to be *Alone* our Advocate, Interceſſor and Judge. *God who at ſundry times and in divers manners ſpake in times paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son*; who,

SERM. III.

who, *when he had by himſelf purged our Sins, ſat down on the right hand of the Majeſty on High*; where *he ever liveth, to make interceſſion for us. To us* Chriſtians therefore, as *there is* (if we will uſe St. *Paul*'s Expreſſion) *One God, even the Father, of whom are all things*; ſo there is alſo *One Lord, even Jeſus Chriſt, through whom are all things. For there is one God, and One Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. As therefore the ſetting up any Idol or *Falſe God*, in oppoſition to, or in conjunction with the *True God*, is Idolatry with regard to *God*; ſo the ſetting up an Idol or *Falſe Mediator*, in oppoſition to, or in conjunction with the *One true Mediator*, is Idolatry with regard to *Chriſt*. Which moſt evidently ſhows, that the Worſhip paid by the Church of *Rome* to *Angels*, and to *Saints departed*, to *Images* and *Relicks*, and to the *Bleſſed Virgin*, whom they profanely ſtile the *Mother of God*; is truly and properly *Idolatry*: And that the Excuſe they plead, that the Worſhip thus paid, is not *Divine*, but only *Mediatorial* Worſhip; is nothing to the purpoſe, and alters not at all the *Nature*, but only a *Circumſtance* of the Crime: An *Idol*-Mediator being as truly and plainly an *Idol*, and a departing from *Chriſt* our only true *Mediator* and *Advocate*; as the worſhipping an *Idol*-God, is a departure from the *Living and True God*. St. *Paul* argues in this manner expreſly and moſt prophetically; *Col.* ii. 18; *Let no Man beguile you of your Reward, in a voluntary humility* [or *will-worſhip*, ver. 23.] *and worſhipping of Angels; intruding into thoſe things which he hath not ſeen, vainly puffed up by his fleſhly mind, And not holding the Head*, which is Chriſt. And the ſame thing was long before propheſied of by *Daniel*, ch. xi. 38; when, ſpeaking of *Antichriſt*, he foretells concerning him, that not only *a God whom his Fathers knew not, ſhould be honour*, that is, ſhould corrupt the true Notion and Worſhip of God; but moreover, that he ſhould *honour* alſo *Gods of Forces*, or (as it is more rightly rendered in the *Margin* of the Bible) ſhould worſhip divers *Gods-Protectors*, that is, Saints, and Angels, and Images, on whom men ſhould rely for Protection and Salvation.

5. *Fifthly* and *Laſtly*; Beſides all theſe ſeveral Kinds and Degrees of Idolatry, *literally* and ſtrictly ſo called; there are alſo ſeveral *other* things, which becauſe they are, in different ways and manners, a departing in ſome meaſure from God, and placing our reliance or our affections upon ſome wrong Object; they are therefore in Scripture *figuratively*, and by way of analogy or proportion, repreſented as *Idolatrous* Practices. Thus St. *Peter* deſcribes thoſe *Jewiſh Proſelytes*, who had indulged themſelves in being preſent, though not perhaps at the actual Worſhip, yet at the *Idol-Feaſts* of the Heathen; he deſcribes them as having *wrought the Will of the Gentiles*, —— *in revellings, banquetings, and abominable* idolatries, 1 *Pet.* iv. 3. And St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of *Jews*, who never had *literally* been idolaters, but neglecting the true Will of God, had placed their whole Truſt upon what he there calls *the weak and beggarly elements* of a formal and ceremonious religion, namely their Superſtitious obſervation of *days and months and times and Years*; he thus expreſſes his cenſure of them, *Gal.* iv. 8. *then when ye knew not God, ye did ſervice unto Them* [unto thoſe things] *which by nature are no Gods*. And among *Chriſtians*, mens taking delight in promoting Corruptions of Religion introduced by human power and violence, the Scripture calls *falling down and* worſhipping *the wild Beaſts*, that is, paying more regard to the Will of oppreſſive and unreaſonable *Men*, than to the Will of *God*; [And worſhipping *the* Image *of the Beaſt*, that is, (with ſome alluſion perhaps to *Nebuchadnezzar*'s golden Image,) being fond of falſe and ſuperſtitious religions, ſet up for the ſake of Worldly Power, Dominion, and Grandeur, by Popes and Papal Councils, thoſe *Images* of Authority ſitting in the Seat and Temple of God, deceiving the Rulers and Nations of the Earth.] Further yet: Becauſe men who have no right Senſe of God upon their Minds, are very apt to place That whole *Truſt* and *Reliance* upon the *Riches* and *Power* of this preſent World, which ought to be placed upon God Alone; hence St. *Paul*, by a very elegant figure, thus expreſſes himſelf; *Covetouſneſs, which is Idolatry*; and *Covetous man, who is an Idolater*: And *charges them who are rich in this World*, —— *not to* Truſt *in uncertain* Riches, *but in the living* God. And our Saviour himſelf, in the ſame figure and manner of ſpeaking, declares, *Matt.* vi. 24. *No man can ſerve* (no man can worſhip) *two Maſters*, —— *ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon*. Laſtly: Becauſe very *vicious* and *debauched* Perſons have

Col. iii. 5.
Eph. v. 5.
1 Tim. vi. 17.

have no regard, no intention, no desire of *pleasing God*; but are wholly intent upon *pleasing* and gratifying their own *corrupt inclinations*, and entirely *Servants* and *Slaves* to their *pleasures*; therefore the Apostle elegantly represents *These* also, as figurative Idolaters; *whose God is their Belly*, Phil. iii. 19. and who *serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly*, Rom. xvi. 18. SERM. III.

Having thus at large explained the *Nature*, *Kinds*, and *Degrees* of *Idolatry* in the *literal* sense; and in what manner 'tis sometimes applied also *figuratively* to *Other Vices*: I shall conclude with a general Observation, or two, upon the whole. And

1*st*. I observe, that *Idolatry* is a Crime which all men hugely detest the *Name* of, and yet it is very apt to grow upon superstitious persons by insensible degrees. Thus the *Jews*, tho' God had given them the most express Command in the World, that as they had never seen any similitude of him, so they should never represent him by any Image, or by the Likeness of Any Creature whatsoever; yet first they set up in the wilderness the *golden Calf*, upon a *particular occasion*; and afterwards they *established Jeroboam's calves*, in *Dan* and *Bethel*, for a *constancy*; as *representations* of the *True God*: And from thence they fell to worship the Image of *Baal*, who was a False *God*: And, by degrees, the *Gods of the Nations*, whom the Lord had cast out from before them, crept in amongst them; Till at length they proceeded to that Heighth of Impiety, as to *sacrifice even their own Children to Moloch*. In like manner among *Christians*, departed *Saints* were at first very honourably spoken of, as having been Martyrs *for the Word of God and for the Testimony of Jesus*; and their *Relicks* began to be had in esteem, as *Memorials* of them. Afterwards, This Veneration towards them increased, to the setting them up as *Advocates* and *Intercessors* with God; which was directly idolizing them, to the great diminution of the Honour due to *Christ* our *Only Mediator*. In order to preserve the *Remembrance* of these Saints the better, *Pictures* and *Images* were introduced; first as *historical* representations only, to assist the Memory: But after a while, peculiar *Favours* and *Blessings*, and a singular *efficaciousness of Prayers*, were believed to be annexed to the *places* wherein such *Images*, or such or such a *particular Image* was set up: Just as *Balaam*, when God would not permit him to curse *Israel* from *One hill*, fancied he might curse them from *Another*. And at last, when This corruption arrived at its heighth, the *Worship* came to be paid directly to the *Images themselves*, even to *wood and stone*; men who called themselves Christians, *falling down to the stock of a Tree*; to idols that *have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not: They that make them, are like unto them, and so are all such as put their trust in them*, Ps. cxv. 8.

2*dly*, I observe, that, in the whole Scripture-history, there is no Crime attended with a greater *general corruption of manners*, or constantly threatned with a *severer Punishment*, than this of *Idolatry* in every kind and degree of it. Among the *Heathens*, *for* This *cause*, says St. *Paul*, (for their departing from the Law of Nature in This point,) *God gave men up unto vile affections, and* —— *to a reprobate mind*, Rom. i. 26, 28. And for *This* cause originally, did God root out the seven nations of the *Canaanites* from before the children of *Israel*. The *Jews*, whenever They fell into any degree of this Crime, immediately the consequences became intolerable. When they had erected the golden calf, *the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*, i. e. to *debauch* themselves. And *Balaam* tempted them to *idolatry* and *fornication* together: And then *God gave them up to worship the Host of Heaven*. And at length (as I before observed) they came to *sacrifice even their Children to Moloch*. To prevent these Evils, God, at the first giving of the Law, strictly forbad all Approaches to this vice; and by his Prophets constantly declared, that he *would not give his Honour to another, nor his Praise to graven Images*. He commanded, not only *actual idolatry*, but even mens *tempting* each other to it, to be punished with *Death*. He threatned, that, for *This* Crime, he would *visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children unto the third and fourth generation*; That is, Upon a People under a *national* covenant, and Blessed or *beloved* (as St. *Paul* speaks) for the *Fathers sakes*, he would for their *national* irreligion, send down very *Long* temporal Judgments. And This threatning has actually been fulfilled upon them in such a captivity and such a dispersion, as never happened to any other nation upon the Face of Earth.

SERM. III.

Among *Chriſtians*, (for the greater part even of *Thoſe alſo* who call themſelves *Chriſtians*, have for many Ages been *Idolaters*, as the Kingdom of *Iſrael* had been before;) Among *Chriſtians*, I ſay, the introducing This Vice, has not only corrupted the Simplicity of the Goſpel, but has alſo greatly encouraged all immorality, by making Superſtition an equivalent inſtead of a virtuous Life; and particularly it has been the cauſe of infinite Cruelties and Perſecutions among Chriſtians, in order to ſupport Tyranny and Superſtition; inſomuch that even of the *Chriſtian Church* it is propheſied in Scripture, that *in her ſhould be found the blood of Saints and of Prophets, and of all that are ſlain upon the Earth.* For our deliverance from this tyranny by the Reformation, we can never be too thankful; nor ever ſufficiently careful, to guard againſt every appearance of approaching towards it again.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

Of the ETERNITY of GOD.

REV. i. 8.

I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, ſaith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come, The Almighty.

THESE words are a deſcription of the Perſon of the *God* and *Father* of All, from the *Primary Attributes* of his *Nature*, and from the *Part* which he is repreſented to bear peculiarly in *delivering This Prophecy*. In the *giving of* This *Prophecy*, he is *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Firſt Author and the laſt End of all. For the whole Prophecy is, *The Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which* God, [that is, the *Father*,] *gave unto him*, ver. 10. And the *manner* of his giving it, is very elegantly deſcribed, *ch.* iv. and v. by a repreſentation of God ſitting upon a Throne, Supreme over all; and giving unto the Lamb a Book, which none other but He, in Heaven or on Earth, was worthy to open. Likewiſe *abſolutely*, with regard to his Proper *Nature*, the primary Attributes of the God and Father of All, are; He is *Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End*, the firſt Author and Fountain from whom all things originally proceed, and the ultimate End in whom all things finally terminate; He is, "*which is, and which was, and which is to come*," eternal of himſelf by abſolute neceſſity of Nature, being derived from None, begotten of None, proceeding from None. Laſtly, He is, *The Almighty*, Supreme abſolutely over all; For ſo the word in the Original Properly ſignifies; including every *one* of the Divine Attributes, and not, as the *Engliſh* word ſounds, all Power *only*. The former Part of this Deſcription, *viz.* the words, *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End*, are alſo applied to *Chriſt*, ver. 11, of *This* chapter, and ver. 13, of the xxii*d* chapter; In which places they ſignify, that our Saviour, by the good pleaſure of the Father, (*all things* being *delivered unto him of the Father*, Matt. xi. 27.) is the *Beginner* and *Completer* of our Salvation; the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, *the* Author *and the* Finiſher *of our Faith*, as St. *Paul* paraphraſes the words,

Heb.

SERM. IV.

Heb. xii. 2. But in the *Text*, 'tis evident theſe words are ſpoken of *the Father*; both from their being joined immediately with the following words, *which is, and which was, and which is to come*, which in the 4*th* verſe are uſed expreſly as a periphraſis, or diſtinguiſhing Deſcription of the *Perſon of the Father*; And the ſame thing appears alſo from the whole Thread and Connexion of the Diſcourſe. For the *Three* Divine Perſons, as bearing ſo many Diſtinct parts in the delivering of This prophecy, are *Thrice* diſtinctly mentioned in This chapter. Firſt, in the Preface or Title, *ver.* 1. *The Revelation of* Jeſus Chriſt; *which* God *gave unto him*; — *and he ſent and ſignified it by his* Angel, [*his Meſſenger,*] *unto his Servant John.* Then *again* in the Salutation, ver. 4. *Grace be unto you, and Peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come*, (that is, from the *Father*;) *and from the ſeven Spirits which are before his Throne*, (that is, from the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe Miniſters all the prophetick Spirits are;) *and from Jeſus Chriſt, who is the Faithful Witneſs.* The Salutation is the ſame, (only in ſublime words according to the prophetick Style) with That of St. *Paul*; *The Grace of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *and the Love of* God, *and the Fellowſhip of the* Holy Ghoſt. Then the *third* time, in the Body of the Diſcourſe, or in the entrance of the deſcription of the Viſion it ſelf, he reſumes his mention of *the Father*, ver. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, ſaith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*; And his mention of the *Holy Ghoſt*, ver. 10. *I was in the Spirit*; And of the *Son*, ver. 13, 18. *I ſaw one like unto the Son of Man, — ſaying, — I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.*

The Occaſion and Connexion of the words being thus explained, the Doctrine from thence ariſing to be diſcourſed upon at this time, is That primary Attribute of the Divine Nature, his abſolute and independent *Eternity. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, ſaith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come.*

In diſcourſing upon which Subject, I ſhall 1*ſt*, briefly ſet forth in general the ſeveral Significations we find in Scripture of the words *eternal, immortal*, and *everlaſting*. 2*dly*, I ſhall offer ſome Obſervations, concerning the *Eternity of* God in particular. And 3*dly*, (which is the moſt material,) I ſhall conſider of what *Uſe* this Meditation may be to us in *Practice.*

In the *Firſt* place, 'tis very neceſſary in general, for preventing Confuſion in our Notions, and for the more diſtinct explication of ſeveral Paſſages in Scripture, to obſerve the different Senſes in which the words *eternal, immortal*, and *everlaſting*, are uſed by the ſacred Writers.

Sometimes, (which is the *loweſt* Senſe they are ever taken in, and yet a very frequent one,) they ſignify nothing more but only a *long* duration. Thus *Gen.* xvii. 8. *I will give unto thee the land wherein thou art a ſtranger, for an* everlaſting *poſſeſſion*; the meaning is, to him and his Heirs for a *long* unlimited ſucceſſion. *Num.* x. 8. *The Sons of Aaron ſhall blow with the Trumpets, and they ſhall be to you for an Ordinance* for ever; for ever, that is, as long as your government and eſtabliſhment ſhall laſt. *Gen.* xlix. 26. The *Hills* are called *Everlaſting*; And *Hab.* iii. 6. the *Everlaſting Mountains*; By which words all that is intended to be expreſs'd is, their being ſtrong and permanent as the frame and conſtitution of the Earth. 1 *Sam.* iii. 13. *I have told Eli, that I will judge his houſe* for ever: It ſignifies only, for many ſucceſſive generations. And *Exod.* xxi. 6. *He ſhall ſerve his Maſter for* ever. The meaning is, He ſhall not go free at the end of the uſual Term of ſeven years, but ſhall continue with him till his Maſter's Death, or till the year of Jubilee. This is the firſt and loweſt Senſe of the words *eternal* and *for ever*; to ſignify only, after a figurative manner of ſpeaking, a certain *long* Period. The *next* Senſe they are uſed in, is to denote a Duration continuing as long as the Subject exiſts, and then putting it in a State out of which it ſhall never be reſtored. Thus *Num.* xxiv. 20. *Amalek was the firſt of the Nations, but his latter End ſhall be, that he periſh* for ever; The meaning is, He ſhall never recover to be again a mighty Nation. *Deut.* xiii. 16. *That City ſhall be an Heap* for ever; the Senſe is, as it follows in the very next words, *it ſhall not be built again.* But the moſt remarkable Paſſage of all, to our preſent purpoſe, is that expreſſion of St. *Jude*, ver. 7. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities about them, — are ſet forth for an Example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal Fire.* 'Tis plain the Apoſtle

does

does not here mean *Hell-Fire*, becauſe *That*, being at preſent *inviſible*, cannot be ſaid to be *ſet forth for an* Example, but as a *Threatning* only. Whatever is *ſet forth for an Example*, muſt be ſomething that is *already* preſent, or paſt: And therefore *the Vengeance of eternal Fire*, muſt in this place ſignify only *That Fire*, which irrecoverably deſtroyed the Cities of *Sodom*, and ended in their final or eternal overthrow. SERM. IV.

In *other* places of Scripture, the words *eternal* and *for ever*, ſignify in a *higher* Senſe, a Duration, not figuratively, but *properly and literally everlaſting*; without *End*, though not without *Beginning*. Thus *Angels* and the Souls of Men are *eternal*, or *immortal*; and the *Happineſs* they enjoy in Heaven, is *everlaſting* Life, an *endleſs* and *eternal* weight of Glory.

Laſtly, The Laſt and *higheſt* and moſt abſolutely perfect Senſe of the words *eternal*, and *everlaſting*, is when they ſignify a Duration of inexhauſtible and never-failing permanency, both without *Beginning* and without *End*; And not only ſo, but including alſo *Neceſſary* and *Independent* Exiſtence, ſo as in *no* manner whatſoever to *derive* from any other. He who Thus exiſts, exiſts *of himſelf* abſolutely, as the Firſt Fountain and Origin of all Being, totally ſelf-ſufficient, and independent of Any. And this is the peculiar property and diſtinguiſhing *perſonal* character, of the *Father only*; [of Him, by whoſe good pleaſure all Creatures were created; of Him, from whom the Holy Spirit [it ſelf] proceedeth; of Him, by whom the Son [himſelf] was begotten; of Him, who in the higheſt and moſt ſuperlative Senſe of the words, is *He which is, and which was, and which is to come.*

Having thus briefly in the *firſt* place, for preventing Confuſion in our Notions, and for the more diſtinct explication of ſeveral paſſages in Scripture, ſet forth in general, the different ſenſes in which the words *eternal*, *immortal*, and *everlaſting*, are made uſe of by the ſacred Writers: I proceed now, in the *Second* place, to offer ſome Obſervations concerning this Doctrine of the *Eternity of* God in particular; concerning *That* Eternity deſcribed in the Text, by the words, *Which is, and which was, and which is to come.*

And *1ſt* we may obſerve, that This Eternity is a Perfection, Attribute, or Character, by which God is *very frequently* deſcribed in *Scripture*, in order to raiſe in our Minds a juſt Awe and Veneration of his divine Majeſty. *Deut.* xxxiii. 27; *The* Eternal *God. Rom.* xvi. 26; *The* everlaſting *God. Iſ.* lvii. 15; The Holy One, *that inhabiteth Eternity.* 1 Sam. xv. 29; *The Strength of Iſrael*, (in the original it is, *the* Eternity *of Iſrael*,) *will not lie nor repent.* 1 *Tim.* i. 17; *The King eternal, immortal.* ch. vi. 16; *who Only hath Immortality.* In the words of the Text, *He which is, and which was, and which is to come.* And to mention but one paſſage more, *Pſ.* cii. 24; *Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old haſt thou laid the foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the work of thy hands. They ſhall periſh, but Thou ſhalt endure; yea, all of them ſhall wax old like a garment; and as a veſture ſhalt thou change them, and they ſhall be changed. But Thou art the ſame, and Thy Years ſhall have no End.* Of which laſt words, it is remarkable, that in the firſt chapter of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* they are alſo in a very proper Senſe applied to *the Son*, as the perſon *by* whom the Father *made*, and by whom he *governs* all things through *all Ages*; by *whom God made the Worlds*, ver. 2, and 10.

2dly, 'Tis to be obſerved, that not only in *Scripture* is God frequently deſcribed by this Attribute of Eternity, but even under the *Light of Nature* alſo is he repreſented to us after the ſame Manner. For the very *Heathen Writers themſelves*, have ſpoken very juſtly and honourably of God in this particular. And not to *Philoſophers* only, but even to the *meaneſt capacities*, are there obvious Arguments in *Reaſon*, to prove clearly the Neceſſity of this divine Perfection, and to ſet it before them in a practical and uſeful Light. For ſince 'tis in *Some* degree a Perfection, *to Be*; and a greater *Degree* of that Perfection, *to continue in Being:* 'tis evident, when we conceive of God, the *moſt perfect* Being, we muſt conceive him to be infinite in *This* perfection alſo, as well as in others; and that, as his Power is not bounded by any oppoſite Strength, nor his Immenſity terminated by any Bounds of *Place*, ſo neither is his Dura-

SERM. IV.

tion limited by any Periods of Time; but that he exists and lives and governs all things, from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning and without end.

Again: 'Tis evident even to the meanest Capacity, which considers things at all; that He who first gave Being to all *other* things, could not possibly have any Beginning *himself*, and *must* therefore necessarily have existed from all Eternity; and that he who hath already existed *from* all eternity, *independently* and *of Himself*; cannot possibly be liable to be deprived of his Being, and must therefore *necessarily* exist for an Eternity to come.

3*dly*, 'Tis worthy of Observation, as to the *Manner* of our conceiving the Eternity of God; that the Scholastick Writers have generally described it to be, not a *Real* Perpetual *Duration*, but *One Point* or *Instant* comprehending Eternity, and wherein all things are really co-existent at once. But unintelligible Ways of Speaking, have (I think) never done any Service to Religion. The true Notion of the Divine Eternity, does not consist in making past things to be still present, and things future to be already come; [which is an express contradiction:] But it consists in *This*, and in *This* it infinitely transcends the manner of existence of all created Beings, even of *those* which shall *continue for ever*; that whereas *Their* finite Minds can by no means comprehend all that is past, or understand perfectly the things that are present, much less know, or have in their power, the things that are to come; but their Thoughts and Knowledge and Power must of necessity have degrees and periods, and be successive and transient as the Things themselves; The eternal, supreme Cause, on the contrary, has such a perfect, independent, and unchangeable comprehension of all things; that in every Point or Instant of *his* eternal Duration, all things past, present, and to come, must be, not indeed themselves present at once, (for That is a manifest contradiction;) but they must be as entirely known and represented to him in one single Thought or View, and all things present and future be as absolutely under his Power and Direction; *as if* there was really no Succession at all, and *as if* all things *had been*, (not that they really *are*,) actually present at once. *A Thousand years in thy sight, are but as yesterday*, Ps. xc. 4. And 2 *Pet.* iii. 8. *One day is with the Lord as a Thousand years, and a Thousand years as one day.* Not, a Thouland years *are* one day; but are to *Him*, as *if* they were only one Day.

Having premised these few Observations concerning the Nature, Manner, and Proof of the Eternity of God; it remains in the *Third* and last place, (which is the most material,) that we consider of what *Use* this Meditation may be to us in Practice.

And 1*st*, This Attribute of *Eternity*, absolute, necessary, and *independent*; is one of the principal Characters, by which the *True God of the Universe*, the One Maker and Governor of all things, the alone Author and Fountain of all Being and Power, is distinguished from *false Deities*, from false Gods, worshipped in *opposition to him*, without any *Power from him*, without any Authority whatsoever either in Nature or Reason, either inherent in themselves, or communicated from *him* that has it of *himself*. *Idols*, are Gods but of yesterday, and which perish to morrow: Beings, which have no Authority and Dominion over us; or perhaps, not real Beings at all, but mere Fictions and Imaginations only: *Lying Vanities*, as the Scripture elegantly stiles them; that is, mere Nothings; having nothing of reality in them; either no Being, or at least no Dominion and Authority over men. But the *True God of the Universe* thus describes himself, *Is.* xliii. 10, *I am He: Before me there was no God, neither shall there be after me.* He was *before* all things, and he shall be *after* all things, Eternal, Immutable, and Self-sufficient. He is *Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End; which is, and which was, and which is to come.*

The High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity.

2*dly*, The Consideration of the *Eternity* of God, is an Argument why his *Providence* ought not to be cavilled at, nor his *Promises* doubted of; even though there be no present appearance of the Performances of his *Promises*; and no present way of explaining, the Methods of his *Providence*. All *other* Beings, having Command only of the *present* Time; if they cannot *immediately* accomplish what they undertake, 'tis never certain but some Change in their

own

own ſtate, or ſome alteration in the Nature and Courſe of *Things*, may prevent them from being able to accompliſh it *at all*. But *God* having in his Hands the Power of *all* Time alike, can never be involved in any difficulty, nor hindred by any intervening accidents, nor perplexed by any change of things or circumſtances, nor influenced by any Length or Periods of Time; ſo as either to become unable or unwilling to perform his remoteſt Promiſes, ſo as to find any difficulty in extricating the moſt perplexed appearances in the Methods of his Providence. Senſeleſs therefore is the objection of thoſe *Scoffers*, who the Apoſtle foretels ſhould *come in the laſt days, walking after their own luſts, and ſaying, Where is the Promiſe of his coming? For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were, from the Beginning of the creation*, 2 Pet. iii. 4. The Apoſtle returns the true and plain Anſwer, ver. 8, *Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a Thouſand years, and a Thouſand years as one day.*

3*dly*, The Conſideration of God's *Eternity*, is a ſure ground of *Truſt and Confidence*, of *hope and cheerfulneſs*, to *good* Men at all times; ſeeing his protection may be relied on and depended upon *for ever*. This is the excellency deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt, *Pſ.* xc. 1, *Lord, thou haſt been our Refuge from one generation to another; Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever the Earth and the World were made, thou art God from everlaſting, and World without End.* His Power, his Goodneſs, his Mercy, and other Perfections, are all eternal and unchangeable as his Being. On this Security, the mind of man (after a Life of Virtue) may rely with full Satisfaction; and they who love righteouſneſs will be joyful therein. *Truſt ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah, is everlaſting Strength*, Iſ. xxvi. 4. and *Deut.* xxxiii. 26, *There is none like the God of Jeſurun; who rideth upon the Heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the Sky: The* eternal *God is thy refuge, and underneath are the* everlaſting *Arms; and he ſhall thruſt out the Enemy from before thee.* The ſame Argument is made uſe of likewiſe by the Apoſtle, with regard to the Interceſſion and Mediation of Chriſt; Heb. vii. 25, *He is able to ſave Them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he* ever liveth *to make interceſſion for them.* Other ſecurity there is no where to be found; nor any thing that can afford ſufficient comfort and ſupport, in the days of adverſity and trouble. The Power of *Men* will fail, and their Friendſhip is fallible and uncertain. The *Pleaſures* of Life are ſhort; and the time will come, when there ſhall be no reliſh in them. At laſt, *Death* puts an end to all the injoyments, and all the hopes of this preſent Life. And therefore a Wiſe man will above all things endeavour to ſecure to himſelf the Favour of Him who liveth for ever; who alone can unlooſe the Bands, even of Death itſelf; and crown him with Immortality, and eternal Life. *Hearken unto Me*, ſaith the Prophet, *ye that know righteouſneſs; the people, in whoſe heart is my Law. Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their reviling. For the Moth ſhall eat them up like a garment, and the worm ſhall eat them like wool. But* my *righteouſneſs ſhall be* for ever, *and my ſalvation from generation to generation*, Iſ. li. 7, 8. And ch. ii. 22, *Ceaſe ye from man, whoſe breath is in his Noſtrils*; (whoſe *Life* depends on ſo ſmall a thing as a Breath;) *For wherein is he accounted of?* The Pſalmiſt in like manner, *Pſ.* cxlvi. 2, *O put not your truſt in Princes, nor in any Child of man; for there is no help in them. For when the Breath of Man goeth forth,* he *ſhall turn again to his earth, and then all his thoughts* periſh. *Bleſſed is he, that hath the* God of Jacob *for his help, and whoſe Hope is in the Lord his God.*

4*thly*, The Conſideration of This divine Perfection, the *Eternity* of God, is a ground for frail and mortal man to hope for *Pity* and *Compaſſion* from him. This is the Uſe the Prophet *Iſaiah* makes of this Meditation, ch. lvii. 16, *I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: For the Spirit ſhould fail before me, and the Souls which I have made.* The Pſalmiſt likewiſe, *Pſ.* cii. 24, *I ſaid, O my God, take me not away in the midſt of my Days*; Thy *years are throughout all Generations.* And *Pſ.* ciii. 13, *Like as a Father pitieth his children; ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him; For he knoweth our Frame, he remembreth that we are duſt. As for man, his days are as graſs; as a flower of the Field, ſo he flouriſheth: For the wind paſſeth over it, and it is gone; and the place there-*

of

SERM. IV.

of ſhall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord, is from everlaſting to everlaſting, *upon them that fear him; and his righteouſneſs unto childrens children.*

5*thly*, The Conſideration of God's being *eternal*, leads us to a right knowledge and juſt ſenſe of the *Excellency of that Reward*, wherewith he will finally crown thoſe who obey his Commandments. The Greatneſs of which Reward conſiſts principally in This, that it is an Inheritance which fadeth not away, *eternal* in the Heavens. This is a Reward, worthy of *Him* to beſtow, whoſe Kingdom ruleth over all; and which *He alone* is capable of beſtowing, who *Himſelf* liveth and reigneth *for ever*. *Behold I come quickly*, ſays our Lord, inveſted with his Father's Power and Eternal Dominion; (in *the glory of his Father*, as 'tis expreſſed, *Matt.* xvi. 27;) *behold*, (ſaith he,) *I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work ſhall be*, Rev. xxii. 12. The *reaſon* is annexed, ver. 13. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Firſt and the Laſt.* God who liveth for ever, hath promiſed to reward his Servants eternally; And therefore moſt elegantly follows in the next verſe That affectionate exclamation, ver. 14. *Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the* Tree of Life. *God* is eternal, by Neceſſity of Nature: But *Man's* immortality, is of free Grace. This therefore his dependent Immortality, or his Poſſibility of attaining to be Immortal, was excellently repreſented *at firſt* by that Figure of *the Tree of Life* growing in Paradiſe; And his condemnation to *Mortality*, by his excluſion from the Benefit of that Tree. And his *reſtoration* to Immortality again by the Will of God, is no leſs properly deſcribed, by his being again admitted to the Tree of Life; *Rev.* ii. 7. *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the* Tree of Life, *which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God.*

Laſtly; If God is *Eternal*, this conſideration ought to be matter of infinite Terror to all impenitent and incorrigible Sinners; that he who liveth for ever, as he will reward his Servants *eternally*, ſo he can *puniſh his Enemies as* long *as he pleaſes*; for there is no End of his Power. This Argument is excellently urged by the Apoſtle, *Heb.* x. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the* Living *God*; to fall under the final Diſpleaſure of Him, who liveth for ever, and can make his Puniſhments as *durable* as he thinks fit. The ſame conſideration is likewiſe laid before us by our Saviour, *Matt.* x. 28. *Fear not them that kill the Body, and after That have no more that they can do; But I will forewarn you whom ye ſhall fear: Fear him, who after he has killed, can deſtroy both Soul and Body in Hell; yea I ſay unto you, Fear him.* The Particulars of This Puniſhment, are beſt ſet forth in the words of Scripture; in thoſe words, which God himſelf has thought moſt proper to work upon our Fear, in ſuch manner as it ought to be worked upon. St. *Mar.* ix. 44. It is, *The Worm that dieth not*, and *the Fire that is not quenched.* Rev. xx. 10. It is, *The lake of Fire and Brimſtone, where* the Devil and *the falſe Prophet are, and ſhall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* And *ch.* xiv. 11. *The ſmoke of their Torment aſcendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no reſt day nor night.* What the full purport and literal meaning of theſe figurative expreſſions is, we do not perfectly know. But this much is evident, that they ſignify the greateſt Severity of Puniſhment, which the Juſtice and Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Him who has infinite and eternal Power, *can* think fit to inflict. *From* which *Wrath to come*, the Goſpel exhorts us to *flee*; and *from which*, God of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON V.

Of the SPIRITUALITY of GOD.

JOH. iv. 24.

God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.

SERM. V.

THESE Words are part of our Saviour's Diſcourſe with the Woman of *Samaria*; for the ſake of making which Diſcourſe to *Her*, and of the conſequent opportunity *That* gave him to inſtruct the reſt of her City, he ſeems to have taken his Journey *on purpoſe* into That Country. For when the Diſciples, during the Time of his being imployed in This Work, would have interrupted him by deſiring him to take ſomewhat to eat; he replied unto them, ver. 34. *My* Meat *is to do the Will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his Work.* After which he adds immediately in the very next Words, ver. 35. *Say ye not, there are yet four Months, and then cometh Harveſt. Behold, I ſay unto you, Lift up your Eyes, and look on the Fields, for they are white already to harveſt.* Which Words, being a *Similitude* only, without the interpretation, and their connexion being ſomewhat difficult; they deſerve briefly to be explained by the way. The true Senſe of them depends, upon what the Evangeliſt had before related, *ver.* 30. that a great number of the *Samaritans*, upon the Woman's report, were coming out of the City to ſee Jeſus. Whom when Jeſus beheld at a diſtance, coming towards him; he ſhows them to his Diſciples, and ſays; *The Husbandman ſupports himſelf under the Labour of his imployment; with a diſtant hope of Harveſt after four months to come: But behold,* our *Harveſt is at hand, and ready to be reaped:* meaning the *Samaritans*, who were ready to receive his Doctrine; and whom upon That account he here compares, as he uſually does all well-diſpoſed Perſons in the whole courſe of his Preaching, to *good Wheat.* And that This Paſſage, which would otherwiſe be very obſcure, ought to be underſtood in this figurative ſenſe, which thus makes it very eaſy and intelligible; appears likewiſe further, from the very next words, *ver.* 36. *And he that reapeth receiveth Wages, and gathereth Fruit* unto Life eternal; *that both he that ſoweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.* The words, *Fruit*

SERM. V.

unto Life eternal, ſhow evidently *what Harveſt* it is he was ſpeaking of. But to return to the more immediate occaſion of the words of the Text. Our Saviour in his Diſcourſe with the *Samaritan* woman, having proved himſelf to her to be a *Prophet*, by diſcovering to her that he knew all the moſt ſecret actions of her Life; ſhe immediately, as was natural to an inquiſitive perſon, asks his Opinion concerning that great Queſtion between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*, which of the Two profeſſed the truer Religion, *ver.* 20. To this, our Saviour gives her a twofold Anſwer. Firſt, that the *Jewiſh*, and not the *Samaritan*, was the true Religion, *ver.* 22. For that in *Jeruſalem* God had choſen to place his name; and, in matters of Religion, the Command of *God* only, and *not* the Inſtitutions of *Men*, are the Rule of Right. But then Secondly he tells her in the next place, that neither the one nor the other of theſe Religions were to continue long, but that Both of them were quickly to give place to the more excellent and ſpiritual Inſtitution of the Goſpel: ver. 21, 23, 24. *The Hour cometh*, ſays he, *when ye ſhall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, worſhip the Father; But—— the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth; For the Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him: God is a Spirit; and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.* In the following Diſcourſe upon which Words, I ſhall 1*ſt* endeavour to explain *what* is meant by *God's* being a *Spirit*; or *how* we are to underſtand That Attribute of the divine Nature, which we call his *Spirituality:* And 2*dly* I ſhall conſider what our conſequent *Duty* is, of *worſhipping* him accordingly *in Spirit and in Truth.*

I. I am to endeavour to explain, *what* is meant by God's being a *Spirit*, or *how* we are to underſtand that Attribute of the divine Nature, which we call his *Spirituality.* And here 'tis to be obſerved, that the Scripture, as it does not much inſiſt upon *proving* to us the *Being* of God, but rather always *ſuppoſes That to be already known* by the Light of Nature; ſo alſo, when it mentions any of the *natural* Attributes of the Divine Eſſence, it does not uſually inlarge either upon the Proof or Explication of them, but generally makes mention of them *occaſionally* only, and as preſuppoſing them beforehand well known by mens Reaſon. Wherefore though the Scripture no where expreſly ſtiles God a Spirit, but in this one ſingle paſſage only; yet ſince in numberleſs places it does by *conſequence* ſuppoſe him to be ſo, and founds our *Duty* to him often upon That Suppoſition; 'tis very reaſonable for us to enquire, ſo far as our Faculties enable us, into the true Notion of ſo excellent an Attribute of the divine Nature. And

1*ſt*, The *firſt and loweſt particular* that is included in the Notion of God's being a *Spirit*, is, that we are to conceive of him as of a Being infinitely removed from all thoſe groſs Properties, which conſtitute the Nature of *Matter* or *Body*. Thus, for Inſtance, the nature of *Matter* or *Body*, is, that it is *Tangible*, and may be felt, or diſcerned by the Touch; which a *Spirit* cannot be: This Diſtinction our Saviour takes notice of, *Luk.* xxiv. 39. Handle *me, and ſee; for a Spirit hath not Fleſh and Bones, as ye ſee* me *have.*

The Nature of *Matter* is, to be *Diviſible* into *Parts*, and to have its Frame *diſſolved*; which a *Spirit* cannot be: This alſo is taken notice of by our Saviour, *Matt.* x. 28. *Fear not them which kill the* Body, *but are not able to kill the* Soul.

The Nature of *Matter* is, to be *Viſible* to the *Eyes:* But a *Spirit*, is abſolutely *Inviſible.*

The Nature of *Matter* is, to be *paſſive* only, or act *only by Neceſſity*, that is, (properly ſpeaking) not to *act at all*, but only to be *acted upon:* But a *Spirit*, is in its nature a *Living, Intelligent, Active* Being.

And This is the *firſt and loweſt particular*, included in the Notion of God's being a Spirit.

2*dly*, By the Scripture's affirming God to be a *Spirit*, we are directed to conceive of him, as of a Being not limited by *human ſhape*, or included under any *other Form* whatſoever. In the darker and more ignorant Ages of the Church, there was a ſect of men, who received their denomination from the Notion they had, that God was to be underſtood as having *really* a *Human Form.* Yet perhaps it was not their intention to ſet up a particular Sect, but might poſſibly be

be merely an effect of their *Ignorance* and *want of Learning*, or of their *inability* only to *expreſs* themſelves properly. Or perhaps, more probably, it was nothing more, but that other *people* miſunderſtood their manner of expreſſing themſelves, and aſcribed to them an opinion which they meant not to maintain. However That be, it is certain that there are None *Now* ſo ignorant, (who are arrived at years of any Underſtanding,) as to think that God has *really* a *human* or any *other Shape*. Yet becauſe in expreſſing the ſeveral *Powers* of God, and his different *manners* of acting, all language is ſo deficient, that we are forced to make uſe of figurative ways of ſpeaking, and of ſimilitudes drawn from *our own* manners of acting, to repreſent our conceptions of *theſe* divine Powers, to which the Faculties of Man bear but a very ſmall and imperfect Analogy; it is therefore very neceſſary, for preventing miſtakes in this matter, that we attend with ſome Care to the true Meaning of thoſe many Paſſages in Scripture, which, in condeſcenſion to the Vulgar, do ſpeak concerning God after this figurative manner. For Example; When the Scripture, ſpeaking of Him, who being an infinite Mind, is therefore really preſent in every place alike, yet repreſents him as *being in Heaven*, as *dwelling* or *ſitting* there, and having the *Earth* for his Footſtool; This ought to be underſtood only as a Deſcription of his Supreme *Authority and Dominion over all*. When mention is made of the *Eyes*, of Him who has *no* Parts; This muſt be underſtood of his perfect *Knowledge* and *Diſcernment* of all things; who, having *made* the Eye, cannot but have *in himſelf* That Power in a much perfecter and higher manner, of which the Eye made by him is only an Inſtrument proportionate to the other ſhort Faculties of weak and finite Creatures. His *looking down* upon the Earth, ſignifies, not any *Poſture*, (which is the Property of *Bodies* only,) but his *watchful Providence* and *continual Inſpection* over all Events. When mention is made of his *Ear*, and of his *bowing down his ear* towards men; This ſets forth to us his Willingneſs and Readineſs to be moved by the Prayers of his Servants; which Prayers, he, who made the Ear, knows and underſtands by the ſame perfect Power, by which he diſcerns the *Heart* as well as the *Mouth*; which Power nevertheleſs, we, thro' defect of language, can no otherwiſe expreſs, than by ſaying that he *hears us*. *Arms* and *Hands*, being in *Men* the inſtruments of Action, and the Seat of Strength, ſignify, when applied to *God*, his *Power and Might*. *Smelling a ſweet ſavour*, is nothing but a *Hebrew* phraſe, drawn from the Law of Sacrifices, to expreſs God's *Acceptance* of the Services of his ſincere worſhippers. And the mention of his *Mouth*, or *Lips*, ſo frequently found in Scripture, is evidently nothing elſe but a familiar Metaphor, to ſignify his *Revealing*, in what manner ſoever it be, *his Will* to his Servants. Indeed, ſuch figurative ways of ſpeaking as theſe, are ſo common in all languages, and ſo well underſtood upon numberleſs occaſions even in common Speech, that the bare mention of them is ſufficient to prevent their being miſtaken, even by the meaneſt Capacities. There is much *greater* Difficulty in explaining *thoſe* paſſages of the *Old* Teſtament, wherein God is repreſented as *appearing viſibly*, and as it were *face to face*, to Holy men of old; when yet both in the *nature of Things*, 'tis certain that the Eſſence of a pure Spirit is abſolutely impoſſible to be ſeen; and moreover in *Scripture* the God and Father of all, is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed by that particular Attribute, that he is the *Inviſible God*, whom *no man has ſeen at any time*, whom *no man hath ſeen or can ſee*, and of whom our Saviour affirms to the *Jews*, that they *had neither ſeen his ſhape nor heard his voice*, Joh. v. 37. Concerning the *appearance* therefore of God in the Old Teſtament, 'tis obſervable that *generally and for the greater part*, in order to prevent miſtakes, and that men might not imagine it was *God himſelf* that appeared, but only *a Glory* to repreſent his appearance; there was *no* particular Shape or Form ſeen in that Glory. Thus to *Moſes* at the burning Buſh, there ſeems to have been the appearance *only of Fire*: To the whole people of *Iſrael* in the Wilderneſs, the glory of the Lord that appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation and upon the Mount, was the appearance *only of a Cloud and Fire*; and therefore *Moſes* exhorts them, *Deut.* iv. 15. *Take good heed unto your ſelves, leſt you make a graven image, the ſimilitude of any figure; for ye ſaw no manner of ſimilitude on the day that the Lord ſpake unto*

SERM. V.

unto you in Horeb, out of the midſt of the fire: To *Moſes*, deſiring to ſee the Face of God, it was denied as a requeſt impoſſible to be granted, *Exod.* xxxiii. 20. To *Abraham*, the word of the Lord ſeems to have come moſt frequently without *any* viſible appearance at all: And in the *Temple* between the Cherubims, which was the Seat wherein he had placed his Name, and the Throne where he would receive the Worſhip and Homage of his people; there never was any other appearance but of a *Cloud and Fire*. This (I ſay) was *generally and moſt uſually* the Caſe, of the appearances of God under the Old Teſtament. But yet, becauſe it *ſometimes* was plainly otherwiſe; and the Lord, that appeared, is *in* ſome *places* undeniably repreſented as under a human ſhape; As when *Adam* heard the *voice of the Lord God* walking *in the garden in the cool of the day*, Gen. iii. 8; And *Abraham* talked with the Lord, as with one of the three *men*, whom he ſaw going towards *Sodom*, Gen. xviii; And of *Moſes* it is related, *Exod.* xxxiii. 11, *That the Lord ſpake unto him face to face, as a man ſpeaketh unto his Friend*; And of the Elders of *Iſrael*, *Exod.* xxiv. 10, that *they ſaw the God of Iſrael, and there was under his feet as it were a paved-work of Sapphire-ſtone, and as it were the Body of Heaven in its clearneſs*; And the Prophets, *Micaiah*, *Iſaiah*, *and Daniel*, ſaw in their viſions *the Lord ſitting upon his Throne, and all the hoſt of Heaven ſtanding about him, on his right hand and on his left:* For the full explication therefore of this matter, and the clear reconciling Theſe Texts of Scripture with other expreſs Texts and with the Reaſon of Things, which do both of them undeniably prove that the Eſſence of the God and Father of all, cannot but be *abſolutely inviſible*; 'tis here further to be obſerved, that all theſe appearances of God in the *Old Teſtament*, wherein he ſeems to have been repreſented as in a human Form; and all thoſe other appearances alſo, wherein there was ſeen only a Glory; were in reality no other than the *Angel of the Covenant*, even *Chriſt himſelf*; who from the Beginning appeared in a bodily Glory, having (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it) *the Form of God*, and being the viſible *Image of the Inviſible God*, repreſenting the Supreme Majeſty of the Father, and acting *in his Name* and *as his Word*. Thus St. *Stephen* expreſly, *Acts* vii. 30. *There appeared to Moſes in the Wilderneſs, the* Angel *of the Lord in a flame of fire in a Buſh*; The *Angel of the Lord*, that is, the *Angel of his Preſence, the great Meſſenger of his Covenant*; as our Saviour is ſtiled, *Mal.* iii. 1. and *Gal.* iv. 14. And This, 'tis very probable, was not altogether unknown to thoſe eminent Prophets under the *Old Teſtament*, to whom God was pleaſed to reveal himſelf more diſtinctly; that the Perſon who appeared to *Adam* in Paradiſe, was that *ſecond Adam* who is the *Lord from Heaven*; that the Lord who talked familiarly with *Abraham*, was He *whoſe day Abraham earneſtly deſired to ſee, and he ſaw it and was glad*, Joh. viii. 56. and that the Lord who ſpake *to Moſes face to face, as a Man talketh with his friend*, was He in whom at length was fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, by whom was revealed openly *Grace and Truth*, Joh. i. 17.

3dly, As by God's being a Spirit, is *meant* that he has no human, or other bodily ſhape: ſo thereby is not *meant*, that he is ſuch a Spirit as are the Souls of Men. For the word, *Spirit*, does not ſignify, as the word, *Body*, does; *one* only determinate *ſort* or *kind* of Beings; But, thro' the defect of Language, and alſo for want of more diſtinct Notions, we by one common Name call *every* Being *a Spirit*, which is *not Body*; tho' probably ſome of thoſe Intelligent Natures we call Spirits, are as much ſuperiour to, and different from, other Spirits, as thoſe others are different from Matter or Body. When therefore we affirm *God* to be a *Spirit*, we muſt not thereby mean only to diſtinguiſh him from *Bodily Subſtance*; but, in like manner as our Soul, by very great Proportion excels the Body, in the ſuperiour Powers of Life, Underſtanding, Knowledge, Activity, and the like; ſo we muſt conceive of *Him*, as of a Being excelling in an infinitely higher proportion, not only the *Souls of Men*, but alſo all *other* Intellectual Natures or Spirits whatſoever.

4thly

SERM. V.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*, When we affirm that God is *a Spirit*, we muſt thereby underſtand that he is *abſolutely and perfectly ſuch*; that is, that he is wholly void of all thoſe Paſſions, Affections, and Commotions, ſuch as Love, Hatred, Anger, Grief, Repentance, and the like, which are the Properties of embodied *Spirits:* and that He, determining all his Actions, with infinite Calmneſs and undiſturbed Serenity in Himſelf, according to the Rules of perfect Right and unerring Reaſon; has theſe Paſſions of *Mind* aſcribed to him in Scripture, only after the ſame figurative manner of ſpeaking as the Senſitive Organs of the *Body* likewiſe are; becauſe thereby to *Us* are beſt repreſented ſuch Actions of *His*, as in their *Effect upon* other *things*, not in their *nature within* Him, bear ſome Analogy to the like Paſſions or Affections in *Us*.

Having thus at large explained, *what* is meant by God's being a *Spirit*; or *how* we are to underſtand That Attribute of the divine Nature, which we call his *Spirituality:* It remains that I proceed now in the

II*d* place to conſider, *what* our conſequent *Duty* is, of *worſhipping* him accordingly *in Spirit and in Truth*. And This phraſe plainly ſignifies, worſhipping him with the real Subſtantial Worſhip of *the Heart and Mind*, in oppoſition to mere *ceremonial and external Forms*; worſhipping him in a *Manner*, worthy of God; with the inward ſincere Devotion of the *Soul and Affections*, evidencing it ſelf in the whole Life and Converſation by the true and acceptable Fruits of *Obedience and Imitation*. This is worſhipping God *in Spirit and in Truth*. But more particularly; the full and diſtinct Meaning of this Phraſe, will beſt be underſtood, by conſidering what are in Scripture the *contrary* Characters, to which *Spirit and Truth* are ſet in oppoſition. Now *Spirit* is ſometimes oppoſed *literally* to the *Body*, and ſometimes 'tis oppoſed *figuratively* to *Fleſhly* or *Carnal* Ordinances. *Truth* alſo in like manner is oppoſed ſometimes literally to *Falſehood*, and ſometimes figuratively to *Types or Shadows*. Conſequently *worſhipping God* in Spirit, when 'tis oppoſed to worſhipping him with the *Body* only, ſignifies *Sincerity*, as oppoſed to *Hypocriſy*; and when 'tis oppoſed to *Fleſh* or carnal *Ordinances*, then it ſignifies *Morality* or *real Holineſs*, in oppoſition to *ritual* or *ceremonial* performances. In like manner; *worſhipping God* in Truth, when 'tis oppoſed to Falſe *Worſhip*, ſignifies worſhipping him according to the rules of the true *Religion*, in oppoſition to *Idolatry*; and when 'tis oppoſed to *Types* or *Figures*, then *Truth* likewiſe ſignifies, as *Spirit* did before, *Morality* or *real Holineſs*, in oppoſition to *ritual* or *ceremonial* performances. This precept therefore, of worſhipping God in *Spirit and in Truth*, is tranſgreſſed, 1*ſt*, by all *Idolaters*, who are guilty of *Falſe* worſhip, in oppoſition to the *Truth*; and 2*dly*, by all thoſe, who placing the chief of Religion in *external Forms and Ceremonies*, which may be performed without True Virtue, worſhip God (as the Scripture expreſſes it) in the *Fleſh* and not in the *Spirit*.

I. They are guilty of tranſgreſſing this Precept in the higheſt and *moſt* preſumptuous manner, who ſet up *Falſe and Idolatrous* worſhip, in oppoſition to the *Truth*. By *Idolatry*, in this place, I underſtand, not the Worſhip of *Falſe* Gods; (For *That*, is not only not worſhipping God *in Spirit and in Truth*, but indeed *not worſhipping him* at all;) But, by *Idolatry*, in this place, I would be underſtood to mean, worſhipping the True God *in an Idolatrous* manner, and by *Falſe Mediums* of Worſhip; in oppoſition to what our Saviour calls (in the words before the Text) *the True worſhippers Worſhipping him in Truth*. Now *This* ſort of falſe worſhip, is That which thoſe *Heathens* are charged with, *Rom.* i. 21. who, *when they* knew God, *yet glorified him not* as God,—*but became vain in their imaginations*, —— *and changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God, into an* Image *made like to corruptible man, and to Birds and four-footed Beaſts and creeping things*. And the *Jews* were ſtill *more inexcuſably* guilty of it, when in the wilderneſs they worſhipped the Golden Calf, moſt abſurdly, as an Emblem or Repreſentation of the God of Heaven; and in *Jeruſalem* itſelf, when they ſet up *high places*, not in oppoſition indeed to the *True God*, but in oppoſition to the *Temple*, in oppoſition to that *Place* of worſhip, which he Himſelf had choſen to place his Name there. And when in *Dan and Bethel* they ſet up Calves, not indeed as Falſe Gods, like the Worſhippers of *Baal*; but as falſe and abſurd repreſentations of the God of

SERM. V.

Iſrael. And the *Samaritans*, 2 *Kings* xvii. 24. when they worſhipped God, not as the Supreme Lord of all things, but as *the God of the Land*, the God of That particular Country. And corrupt Chriſtians, ſtill the *moſt inexcuſably of all*; when, notwithſtanding ſo many repeated Declarations of the Will of God to the contrary, they yet continue to worſhip him thro' *Falſe Mediators*, thro' the pretended Interceſſion of Saints and Angels and of the Bleſſed Virgin, whom he hath *not* appointed to any ſuch Office: And when moreover, by introducing *Images*, not only of Chriſt, but even of God himſelf, they totally deſtroy the Spiritual Purity of the Goſpel-worſhip.

Now the *reaſons why* this *particular Species of Idolatry*, this worſhipping the *True God* under *Falſe Images*, is ſo ſeverely condemned in Scripture, are principally theſe Two.

1*ſt*, Becauſe it tends to ſubvert the Great and Primary Foundation of all Religion, by giving men *mean and unworthy Notions of God*, confining his Preſence, and falſely ſuppoſing that there can be any ſuch Thing as a Similitude or Repreſentation of him. *Foraſmuch* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *as we are the offſpring of God*, (foraſmuch as even *we our ſelves* are rational Beings, and our Minds far ſuperiour to any corporeal repreſentation,) *we ought not* (ſaith he) *to think that the* God-head *is like unto* (that is, can in any manner be repreſented by,) *Gold or Silver, or Stone graven by Art and Man's device*, Acts xvii. 29. The Heathens, knowing that God was every where preſent, *firſt* worſhipped him in *the Sun and Stars*, as the moſt illuſtrious Inſtruments of his Power, and the beſt Viſible Repreſentations of his glorious Greatneſs and Goodneſs. *Then* they ſoon fell to worſhip the *Sun and Stars* themſelves, inſtead of the God who *made* thoſe bright Luminaries, and whom they ſuppoſed to be *in them*. And from thence by degrees they deſcended to worſhip the meaneſt plant; and at laſt Wood and Stone, even the workmanſhip of their own hands. The *Jews* in like manner, I wiſh it could not be ſaid that *Chriſtians* alſo, from beginning to make imaginary repreſentations of God, quickly fell by degrees from more refined Idolatry, to worſhipping at laſt, in the moſt ſtupid manner, even Stocks and Stones. This being in the higheſt degree contrary to the Precept of worſhipping God according to *Truth*, 'tis with great Elegancy and juſt Sharpneſs of Reproof, that in the Old Teſtament Idols are frequently ſtiled *Falſhood*, and *Lyes*, and *Lying Vanities*; and the Makers thereof, *Teachers of* Lyes; and in the New Teſtament likewiſe, *Idolaters* are called by way of Eminence, *Lyars*, Rev. xxi. 8. and *whoſoever loveth or maketh a* Lye, ch. xxi. 27, xxii. 15; and that they *turn the Truth of God into a* Lye, *Rom.* i. 25. To prevent ſo great a corruption of the firſt Principles of Religion in the Notion of a Deity, the ſecond Commandment is delivered in larger and more explicit Terms, than any of the reſt: *Thou ſhalt not make to thy ſelf any graven Image, nor the Likeneſs of any thing that is in Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Waters under the Earth*; That is, Thou ſhalt not think ſo meanly and unworthily of God, as to imagine that He who made all things, can be repreſented by any Similitude of the things that are made. And 'tis with great elegancy of expreſſion, that the Prophet *Iſaiah* derides the Makers of Images, ch. xl. 18, *To whom will ye liken God, or what likeneſs will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven Image, and the goldſmith ſpreadeth it over with gold, and caſteth ſilver chains.*

Jer. x. 14. Am. ii. 4. Jon. ii. 8. Hab. ii. 18.

2*dly*, The other reaſon, why this Idolatry is ſo ſeverely condemned in Scripture, is becauſe it always tends to *corrupt mens Manners*, and to introduce all ſort of Wickedneſs. St. *Paul*, in his whole *firſt chapter to the* Romans, largely ſhows, how the *Heathens*, when *they changed the Truth of God into a Lye*, were conſequently *given up unto vile affections among themſelves*; and their own Hiſtories ſhow, that, departing from the natural Notion of God, they came at length even to *human Sacrifices*, and ſuch other Cruelties, as no other principle, how corrupt ſoever, but only This of *Idolatrous Superſtition*, could have led men to. The *Jews* in like manner, whenever they fell into Idolatry, their whole Hiſtory ſhows, how it totally deſtroy'd all Senſe of Virtue out of their minds, and they came at laſt to *ſacrifice even their own* children *to Moloch*. And ſad it is to obſerve, how *Chriſtian Idolatry* alſo has had the ſame Effect, cauſing men

Tantum religio potuit ſuadere malorum.

men to rely on *Saints*, and even on the *Relicks* of Saints, inſtead of the practice of Righteouſneſs and true Virtue; and teaching them, inſtead of Chriſtian Charity, and univerſal Love, and Good-will towards all men, to be on the contrary guilty of ſuch *inhuman Cruelties*, as men could never have thought of, who had never heard of any Religion at all. SERM. V.

Thus the Precept in the Text, of *worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth*, is tranſgreſſed in the Firſt and Higheſt manner, by the *Practice of Idolatry*.

II*dly*, It is in the Next place tranſgreſſed by thoſe, who place the chief of Religion *in external Forms and Ceremonies*. But of This, hereafter.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Of the SPIRITUALITY of GOD.

JOH. iv. 24.

God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.

SERM. VI.

THE Nature and Manner of the Worſhip we are to pay to God, depends upon the conſideration of the *Nature of* Man, who is to pay that Worſhip; of the *Nature of* God, to whom the Worſhip is to be paid; and of the Will *of God*, which is the Rule and Meaſure of our Obedience, when we conſider him as our Governor, our Lord, and our Judge. The *Nature of* Man is, that he is a *reaſonable and intelligent* Creature; and therefore the Worſhip *he* is to pay to God, muſt be a *reaſonable and intelligent* Worſhip. The *Nature of* God is, that he is a *ſpiritual Being, infinitely perfect*; and therefore the only Worſhip *he* can delight to receive, is that *ſpiritual Worſhip* which proceeds from the Heart and Affections, from a *ſincere Mind*, and from a *righteous Intention*. The Will *of God*, as revealed in Scripture, is only a Confirmation and Illuſtration of the *Precepts of Nature*, with greater Clearneſs and with ſtronger Authority; excepting only, that in condeſcenſion to the *Infirmity* of the *Jews*, He gave *them* for a Time, Precepts which in themſelves were not good, but ſuited to the then preſent Circumſtances of that people; and, in condeſcenſion to the *Neceſſities* of *Chriſtians*, he has appointed *us* Two Sacramental Rites, not as in Themſelves eſſential to Religion, but as *external Helps* to bind ſtronger upon us the Obligation of thoſe Moral Duties wherein the eſſence of Religion truly conſiſts, and as *inſtituted Means* of conveying and applying to good men in this imperfect State, and upon true Repentance, the requiſite Benefit of a Saviour. Theſe *latter*, the Inſtitutions given to *Chriſtians*, are indeed of *perpetual* obligation; becauſe the Duties, to which theſe outward Rites are our ſolemn obligation; are themſelves of Neceſſity eternal: Yet has the Scripture taken exceeding great care to inſtruct us, that not in the performance of theſe outward Rites, but in thoſe Spiritual Duties of Righteouſneſs, Juſtice, Charity and Holineſs, to which the outward Rites are but Helps and Obligations, does the Life and Spirit of true Religion conſiſt. The *former*, *viz.* the Inſtitutions given to the *Jews*, were

were declared not only to be inferiour to the Duties of Morality, and wholly subordinate to them; but moreover that they were also of temporary *appointment* only, suited to the present Infirmities of that people, and to give place in due time to a more spiritual and more acceptable Form of Worship. The Time of establishing which better Religion, being then just accomplished, when our Saviour spake the words of the Text; 'tis evident they are to be understood as a *Reason* given, from the Attributes of God and from the Nature of Things, *why* the Spiritual Religion of the Gospel, which consists in the practice of Universal Righteousness, Charity, Holiness and Truth, should be more acceptable to God, than the *ceremonious* performances of the *Jewish* Law, or any *outward* Devotions of *Christian* Hypocrisy. *God*, says he, *is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.* In a Foregoing Discourse upon which words, I proposed 1*st* to explain, *what* is meant by *God*'s being a *Spirit*; or *how* we are to understand That Attribute of the Divine Nature, which we call his *Spirituality*; And 2*dly* to consider, *what* our consequent *Duty* is, of worshipping him accordingly *in Spirit and in Truth*. In explication of the *Former* of these, *what* is meant by God's being a *Spirit*; or *how* we are to understand That Attribute of the Divine Nature, which we call his *Spirituality*; I have shown, 1*st*, That the *first and lowest particular* included in the Notion of God's being a *Spirit*, is that we are to conceive of him as of a Being infinitely removed from all those gross Properties, which constitute the Nature of *Matter* or *Body*. 2*dly*, That by the Scripture's affirming God to be a *Spirit*, we are directed to conceive of him, as of a Being not limited by *human Shape*, or included under any *other Form* whatsoever. 3*dly*, That since the word, *Spirit*, does not signify, as the word, *Body*, does, *one* only determinate *Sort* or *Kind* of Beings; but, on the contrary, Every *kind* of Beings, which are *not Body*; therefore we must not hereby mean only to distinguish God from *Bodily Substance;* but, in like manner as our Soul by very great Proportion excels the Body, so we must conceive of *Him*, as excelling, in an infinitely higher Proportion, not only the Souls of Men, but also all *other* intellectual Natures or Spirits whatsoever. 4*thly* and *lastly*, that when we affirm God to be *a Spirit*, we must thereby understand that he is in all respects *absolutely, and perfectly* Such; that is to say, that he is wholly void of all those Passions, Affections and Commotions, such as Love, Hatred, Anger, Grief, Repentance, and the like; which are the properties of *embodied Spirits*; and that therefore all these things are ascribed to him in Scripture *figuratively* only, and not *literally*. As to the *Second* general Head, *what* our consequent *Duty* is, of worshipping him accordingly *in Spirit and in Truth*; I have shown that it consists, in worshipping him 1*st* with *True* worship, after such a *manner* as is worthy of God and suitable to his Nature, in opposition to all *false* or *idolatrous* worship; and 2*dly*, That it consists in worshipping him with *Spiritual* worship, That of the Heart and Mind and morally virtuous Actions, in opposition to merely *ritual and ceremonial Forms*: And that therefore the Precept in the Text is principally transgrest, 1*st* by all *Idolaters*, who are guilty of *False* Worship in opposition to the *Truth*; and 2*dly* by all those, who placing the chief of their Religion in *external Forms and Ceremonies*, worship God (as the Scripture expresses it) in the *Flesh* and not in the *Spirit*. The *former* of these, I inlarged upon in my last Discourse, and showed how Idolatrous or *False* worship, in opposition to the *Truth*, tends 1*st* to subvert the Great and Primary Foundation of all Religion, by giving men *mean and unworthy Notions of God*; and 2*dly* how it tends to *corrupt mens manners* in *other* respects, and to introduce all sorts of Wickedness. It remains that I proceed Now, to consider,

SERM. VI.

II. In the *Next* place, how *all* They are likewise guilty of transgressing the Precept in the Text, who (though they are *not* indeed guilty of *False* worship, yet) placing the chief of their Religion in *outward Forms and Ceremonies*, worship God, that is, worship the True God, in the *Flesh* (as the Scripture expresses it) and not in the *Spirit*. God is a Being, of infinite Holiness, Justice, Righteousness, Goodness and Truth; and 'tis his Will and Pleasure that all reasonable Creatures, according to their several Capacities, should conform themselves to his Likeness by the Imitation of these great and excellent Perfections. In *This*, consists the Essence of Religion; These Dispositions of Mind, are the most excellent *Virtues* upon *Earth*: and the *Foundation of the Happiness* of *Heaven*. These

SERM. VI.

Qualifications are the Great *End and Deſign*, for the *promoting* of which, all religious Inſtitutions were intended; and no external Performances whatſoever are any otherwiſe of any Value, than as *Means* to promote theſe Great *Ends*. When therefore Men invert this natural Order of Things, and ſeparate the *Means* from the *End*; when they take up wholly with thoſe external Obſervances, which in themſelves are of no value, but only as they tend to, and promote that Subſtantial Virtue and Righteouſneſs, which is finally good and intrinſically in its own Nature profitable unto men; their religion in ſuch caſe, like a Shadow without a Subſtance, is vain; and like a Body without a Spirit, is dead. Of This great and fundamental Fault were guilty,

1*ſt*, The *antient Jews*; who, miſtaking the Deſign of their own Law, which was by *Sacrifices and Expiations* to remind them of the Neceſſity of *true Repentance and Amendment of Life*; on the contrary, neglected the *End*, which was *Repentance and Amendment*; and contented themſelves with the bare *Means*, which were the *ritual Obſervations of the Law*; being deſirous that *Sacrifices and Expiations* ſhould ſerve *inſtead of*, and make amends for the *want of*, That Purity of Life and Manners, which in reality they were intended only as *Means* to promote; and from the Care of which, all *atonements and propitiations* were ſo far from diſcharging men, that indeed they were of no other Uſe, and deſigned for no other purpoſe, than to bind upon men more ſtrongly their obligations to That *inward and real Holineſs*, of which all *legal and external Purifications* were but *Types and Figures*. The not rightly underſtanding this Matter, was the great Error of the antient *Jews*: And an Error of ſuch importance it was, affecting even the very Eſſence of Religion, that one of the main deſigns of the preaching and writings of all the Prophets, was to reprove them for, and draw them off from, ſo fatal a miſtake, *Hath the Lord as great delight*, ſays God by the Prophet *Samuel*, (1 *Sam.* xv. 22.) *Hath the Lord as great delight in Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the Fat of Rams.* By the Prophet *David*, *Pſ.* l. 13. *Will I eat the Fleſh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats?* Nay, but, *Offer unto God Thankſgiving and pay thy Vows unto the moſt High.* By the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. i. 11. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me, ſaith the Lord; ----- while your hands are full of Blood*, that is, of murder and unrighteous oppreſſion: *But waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow*: Otherwiſe, *He that killeth an ox*, [ch. lxvi. 3.] *is as if he ſlew a man; and ——— he that burneth incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol.* By the Prophet *Amos*, ch. v. 21. *I hate I deſpiſe your Feaſt-days, ——— your burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings; ——— But let judgment run down as water, and righteouſneſs as a mighty ſtream.* Laſtly, by the Prophet *Micah*, ch. vi. 7. *Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of Rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oyl? ———* Nay, but *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* And in a paſſage ſtill more remarkable than all theſe, *Jer.* vii. 22. *I ſpake* not *unto your Fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings or Sacrifices; but This thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my voice.* There is here a conſiderable difficulty in the expreſſion, becauſe it ſeems in the *Engliſh Tranſlation*, as if it were a *denial* of God's having inſtituted Sacrifices *at all*; which would be a direct contradiction to the whole Hiſtory of Scripture. But 'tis a very remarkable Idiom in the *Original*, and deſerves therefore to be obſerved carefully, for the right underſtanding of This and many other the like places; that what in modern languages is always expreſſed in one Sentence by words comparative, the *Hebrew* uſually expreſſes in two diſtinct periods, by affirming concerning *one* thing, and denying of *another*, what is intended to be only comparative between *Both*. The Senſe therefore of theſe words, *I ſpake* not *to your Fathers concerning Sacrifices*, is; I ſpake not concerning *them*, as if they were of the ſame importance with *moral obedience*. That This is the true interpretation of the Phraſe, there is an evident proof in the parallel place, *Hoſ.* vi. 6; where the prophet uſing that very ſame expreſſion, *I deſired mercy, and* not *Sacrifice*; explains it comparatively in the very

ry next words; *and the knowledge of God*, more than *burnt-offerings*. And from This idiom of the *Hebrew* language, the ſame manner of ſpeaking has been ſometimes derived into the New Teſtament. Thus *Mat.* xv. 24. *I am* not *ſent*, ſaith our Saviour, *but to the loſt ſheep of the Houſe of Iſrael:* His meaning is not abſolute, that he was *not* ſent *at all* to any other than the *Jews* only; but that he was not ſent ſo *ſoon*, ſo *immediately*, ſo *principally*; his Miſſion was not to be made known ſo *early*, to any other Nation, as to *the loſt ſheep of the Houſe of Iſrael.* Again, *Joh.* xii. 44, *He that believeth on* Me, *believeth* not *on* Me, *but on* Him *that ſent me*, that is, not ſo *much*, not ſo *properly* on *Me*, as on *Him that ſent me.* Joh. vii. 9, *I pray* not *for the World, but for* them *which thou haſt given me:* Theſe words have ſometimes been alledged in proof of the *abſolute reprobation* of the greateſt part of mankind: But from what has been now ſaid concerning the nature of the *Jewiſh* Language, it ſufficiently appears that our Saviour's meaning, was only to pray for his Diſciples *more eſpecially*, and in a *more particular manner*, than for the reſt of the World. *Acts* v. 4, *Thou haſt* not *lied unto* Men, *but unto* God; that is, not *only* unto Men, not *ſo much* to mere Men, as to *God himſelf* who inſpired them with his Holy Spirit. 1 *Cor.* i. 17, *Chriſt ſent me*, not to *baptize, but to preach the Goſpel*; that is, the Proper Office of an Apoſtle, was not *ſo much* to baptize, to perform the Ceremony Himſelf with his own hands, but rather to attend conſtantly the Work of preaching the Goſpel. 1 *Cor.* vi. 12, *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient:* The meaning is not, that all things were alike lawful; but that all *thoſe* things which *are* lawful, are not therefore conſequently expedient. And, to mention but *one* place more, 1 *Tim.* ii. 14, Adam *was* not *deceived, but the* Woman *being deceived was in the tranſgreſſion:* The Meaning is not that *Adam* was *not deceived at all*, but that *his* Deception was *conſequent* upon the *Woman*'s being deceived *firſt*, and that it was brought upon *him* by *her* means. The Apoſtle had ſaid in the verſe foregoing; *Adam was* firſt formed, *then Eve:* And he adds; but *Adam was* not deceived, that is, was *not* firſt *deceived*; The Deception began not at *him*, but at *her.* From all theſe, and from other the like paſſages which might be alledged, 'tis abundantly evident, that when God tells the *Jews* by the Prophet, *I ſpake* not *to your Fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning Burnt-offerings or Sacrifices, but This thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my voice*; though the manner of the expreſſion ſeems *Now* unuſual to *Us*, yet in the language of the *Jews at that time* it was very eaſy, and the meaning obvious, that hereby was not denied God's having commanded Sacrifices *at all*, but their *comparative value* only is denied, when diſtinguiſhed from the Practice of moral Virtue and Righteouſneſs.

SERM. VI.

It may here perhaps by ſome be inquired; if the inſtitutions of the *Jewiſh* Law, were matters comparatively of ſo ſmall importance; *Statutes* (as the Prophet expreſſes it) *which were not good, and Judgments whereby men ſhould not live*; for *what reaſon* then was That Law given by divine appointment at all? To This queſtion, the Scripture intimates to us ſeveral Anſwers. In the *firſt* place, it was given That People, to preſerve them from Idolatry; to keep them from running after the Cuſtoms of the Idolatrous Nations round about them; by employing them in the continual Service of the True God. This reaſon is hinted at in ſeveral places of the Law; and particularly, *Deut.* v. 22, where, at the time of the *original* delivering of the *Ten Commandments* from God to the children of *Iſrael* 'tis affirmed that *he added no more*; but after their proneneſs to Idolatry ſhown in the caſe of their ſetting up the *golden calf*, the whole ceremonial Law with all its burdenſome rites was immediately injoyned them. In the *next* place, *another reaſon* of appointing thoſe numerous Sacrifices and Expiations, Waſhings, Purifications, and the like; was to remind that Stiff-necked people, of their Obligation to Purity and true Holineſs of life, by ſuch corporeal Figures and Emblems, as might always be viſibly before their Eyes; ſuited to their capacities, and prejudices; proper to withdraw them from the Pollutions of their neighbouring Nations; to admoniſh them conſtantly, of their being the peculiar People of the True God, the Holy One of *Iſrael*; and conſequently to keep

SERM. VI.

keep them under a perpetual Senſe of their obligation to be Holy even as He was Holy. *Laſtly*, *Another reaſon* of God's giving the Law of *Moſes*, was to be a prophetick Typifying of the Meſſiah to come; and *a Schoolmaſter*, (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *Gal.* iii. 24. iv. 1.) *to bring men unto Chriſt*. For *the Law*, (ſaith St. *John*,) *was given by Moſes, but Grace and Truth came by Jeſus Chriſt*; The meaning is; The *Law*, was only a *Type* or *Shadow* of That *Truth*, and an *Emblem* of That *Grace* or *Mercy* of God, which was to be clearly and fully revealed in the *Goſpel*. And for That Reaſon, the Law was not of *perpetual*, but only of *temporary* inſtitution: *There is verily* (ſays the Apoſtle) *a* diſannulling *of the Commandment going before, for the Weakneſs and Unprofitableneſs thereof*; it being *only a* figure *for the Time then preſent*, —— *impoſed upon them till the time of* Reformation; —— *a* Shadow *of good things to come, and not the very Image* (the Senſe is, *not the very Subſtance*) *of the things themſelves*, Heb. x. 1. The not attending to theſe *Ends* of the Inſtitution of the Law of *Moſes*, which yet are very plainly hinted in the Law itſelf and in the Writings of the Prophets; was a principal Cauſe of the *antient Jews* falling into that fundamental Error, of laying greater ſtreſs upon the bare *ritual and ceremonial performances*, than upon that *real Virtue and true Righteouſneſs*, whereof theſe outward Obſervances were but Types and Figures contrary to the perpetual Exhortations of all their own Prophets, and contrary to that great Duty enforced in the Text from *natural Reaſon itſelf*, that God, being a Spirit, ought conſequently to be worſhipped in Spirit and in Truth.

Joh. i. 17.

Heb. vii. 18. ix. 9, 10. x. 1.

2*dly*, The *next* remarkable Example, of perſons erring fundamentally from this great Rule of *worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth*, were thoſe *Jewiſh* Converts among the Primitive Chriſtians, who contended that *after* their Converſion it was ſtill neceſſary to obſerve the *Law* together with the *Goſpel*. Which Opinion of theirs, was the Occaſion of much Controverſy in the Apoſtles times; as may be ſeen at large, in the xv*th* chapter of the *Acts*, and in the whole Epiſtle to the *Galatians*. Which Controverſy being Now long ſince at an End; it would no longer have been of any Uſe to *Us* to inquire into the State of it, were it not that accidentally 'tis ſtill very neceſſary to the right underſtanding two of St. *Paul*'s epiſtles, That to the *Romans*, and That to the *Galatians*; many erroneous and hurtful Doctrines in Chriſtianity, having been occaſioned by mens ignorantly applying ſeveral Phraſes in thoſe Epiſtles, according to the *modern* Senſe of words among Chriſtians at this day; when in reality they were by the Apoſtle uſed only according to the Signification of the words in *thoſe* days, relating to This controverſy with the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians about the neceſſity of ſtill retaining the *Law* of *Moſes*. For againſt *Theſe* mens opinions it is, that St. *Paul* argues, and *not at all* in the way of comparing one Chriſtian virtue with another, when he earneſtly in theſe Epiſtles magnifies *Faith* in oppoſition to the *Law*, *Grace* in oppoſition to *Works*, and the *Spirit* in oppoſition to *Fleſh* or *carnal Ordinances*. Thus when he tells his converts, *Rom.* iii. 28, and *Gal.* ii. 15, iii. 2, that they are *juſtified by* Faith, *without the deeds of the* Law; and that they *received* the Holy Ghoſt, *not by the works of the* Law, *but by the Hearing of* Faith; his meaning is not, (as ſome in later Ages have unreaſonably underſtood him,) that men are juſtified barely by *Faith* or *Believing*, as diſtinguiſhed from *Virtue* or *Righteouſneſs of Life*; but that men are juſtified by the Obedience of the *Goſpel*, (ſo the word *Faith* always ſignifies in St. *Paul*'s epiſtles,) and is therefore ſometimes expreſly called *The obedience of Faith*, Rom. xvi. 29; and *obedience* to *the Faith*, Rom. i. 5; and *Acts* vi. 7, they are juſtified (he ſaith) by the Obedience of the *Goſpel* only, by That *Fidelity* or *Sincerity* in Religion, which the Goſpel requires, without obſerving the ceremonies of the Law of *Moſes*. In like manner, when he tells them that their Salvation is not of *works*, but of *Grace*, Rom. xi. 5; and *Gal.* v. 4, he does not mean that God ſaves them without the *works of Virtue and Righteouſneſs*; but that they are ſaved by the gracious *diſpenſation of the* Goſpel, (That is always the meaning of the word, *Grace*, in theſe Epiſtles,) they are ſaved by the gracious *diſpenſation of the Goſpel*, by the merciful Terms of Repentance declared through Chriſt, and not by the *ritual and rigorous Obſervations of the Moſaick Law*. Further; becauſe one great End of This Laſt Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, was to teach men to worſhip God with pure worſhip, *in Spirit and in Truth*,

Particularly, ch. vi, 12.

Truth, with all Holineſs and Righteouſneſs of the *Heart and Mind*; in oppoſi- SERM.
tion to *external Forms and carnal Ordinances*, Such as Circumciſion, Bodily Waſh- VI.
ings, Purifications, and the like; which affect the *Body* only; therefore St. *Paul* frequently expreſſes the Goſpel of Chriſt by the figurative Name of *Spirit*, and the Law of *Moſes* by that of *Fleſh*: Gal. iii. 3, *Are ye ſo fooliſh? Having begun in the* Spirit, *are ye now made perfect by the* Fleſh? Theſe Phraſes, which otherwiſe might ſeem very difficult, becauſe different from modern ways of ſpeaking; do, from what has been ſaid, appear plainly to ſignify This only, that the *Galatians* were worthy of reproof, for that ſince their embracing the Religion of *Chriſt*, they imagined they could ſtill become *more perfect*, by continuing the practice of *Jewiſh* obſervances. And that This is his true and only meaning may be ſhown yet more evidently from the following parallel places; *Rom.* ii. 29, *Circumciſion, is that of the* Heart, *in the* Spirit, *and not in the* letter: And *ch.* vii. 6, *We are delivered from the* Law; — *that we ſhould ſerve in newneſs of* Spirit, *and not in the oldneſs of the* letter: And *Phil.* iii. 3, We *are the circumciſion, which worſhip God in the* Spirit, — *and have no confidence in the* Fleſh. *Spirit*, in all theſe places, is the *ſpiritual worſhip* of the Goſpel; and what he here ſtiles *Fleſh*, is the ſame as what he elſewhere calls a *carnal commandment*, Heb. vii. 16; and *ch.* ix. 10, *carnal ordinances*, namely *meats and drinks and divers waſhings*. Theſe, where there is no true Virtue and Righteouſneſs of Life, are the Forms *of Godlineſs* without the Power *of it*; the corruption, which our Saviour principally meant to reform in the words of the Text; and which St. *Paul* cautions againſt, when he declares, that *the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; Rom. xiv. 17: *that we are miniſters of the New Teſtament, not of the* letter, *but of the* Spirit, 2 *Cor.* iii. 6; that *Circumciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing, but Faith which worketh by Love*: And inſtanceth in *Abraham*, Rom. iv. 3, 10. that *before* his receiving the Seal of Circumciſion, he *believed* in God, and obeyed his commandments, *and it was counted unto him for Righteouſneſs*: The Religion of *Abraham*, was the ſame as the Spiritual Religion of the *Goſpel*; *He* lived *before* the Law, as our Saviour requires that *Chriſtians* ſhould do *after* the law; *worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth.*

3*dly*. As Some among the *Antient Jews*, and *Antient Chriſtians*, were, in the manner already ſhown, guilty of tranſgreſſing this great Precept of *worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth*; ſo among Chriſtians of all *later* Ages likewiſe, there are Many too juſtly chargeable with being guilty of the ſame Fundamental Fault in different reſpects. In the

1*ſt* Place, Thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, do in the Higheſt degree tranſgreſs this great Commandment of our Saviour, when inſtead of that *Spiritual Worſhip*, which our Lord intended to eſtabliſh, they on the contrary fill their religion with more *rites and ceremonies*, than even the *Law of Moſes itſelf* was burdened withal; And (which of all other things is the moſt profane,) compel men by force, to make external and hypocritical Profeſſions in matters of Religion; which yet, they well know, if it is not ſeated in the Heart, is no Religion at all.

2*dly*, Of tranſgreſſing this precept in the Text, *thoſe* Chriſtians alſo are guilty in *All* communions, who place the chief of their religion in the *Form* of Godlineſs, in barely *going to Church*, and *in receiving the Sacrament*, and in ſuch other *outward Performances*, which ought not indeed to be *left undone*, but which are *Then only* acceptable to God and uſeful to the Souls of Men, when they are Means of producing that True Holineſs, Charity, and Righteouſneſs of life, which is, in Heaven, as well as upon Earth, the eternal and unchangeable eſſence of Religion. Such perſons as Theſe therefore are well reproved by the Prophet *Jeremy*; ch. vii. 4. *Truſt ye not in lying words, ſaying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are theſe*; But *throughly amend your ways and your doings; throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; oppreſs not the ſtranger, the fatherleſs and the widow.*

3*dly*. They alſo cannot be ſaid to worſhip God in Spirit and in Truth, who place Religion chiefly in matters of *opinion, ſpeculation, and diſpute*; in Doctrines hard to underſtand, and of no uſe in practice. *Though I underſtand all* myſteries, ſaith the Apoſtle, and *all* Knowledge; *and have not charity: I am nothing*, 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

SERM. VI.

There follows in the next verſe an expreſſion ſtill more remarkable; *though I beſtow all my goods to feed the* poor, *and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* From this paſſage it appears, that the word *Charity*, in the New Teſtament, does not ſignify (as we *now* uſe it) only *Alms to the poor*; but *That* univerſal Love and Good-will towards all men, which includes both *It* and *all other* Virtues; The conſtant practice of *which* univerſal Charity, is *indeed* Worſhipping God *in Spirit and in Truth.*

4*thly*, Of tranſgreſſing this Precept in the Text, *They* alſo are guilty, who are over-zealous and contentious about *ſmall* things, which withdraw the affections and the attention from *greater.* Their ſuperſtitious *zeal* about which things, is like the unprofitable excreſcencies of fruitful plants, eating out and deſtroying the life of religion. In our Saviour's phraſe, *they tithe mint, aniſe and cummin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and truth.*

Laſtly, All ſuch perſons are very far from worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth, who living in the practice of *any* known ſin, ſerve not God with the *whole* Heart and *Spirit*, *cleanſing themſelves from all filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in the fear of the Lord.*

SERMON

SERMON VII.

Of the IMMUTABILITY of GOD.

MAL. iii. 6.

For I am the Lord; I change not.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words of the Prophet, I ſhall *firſt* endeavour to ſhow *in what* reſpects God muſt be acknowledged to be *unchangeable*; or *wherein* this Attribute of *Immutability* conſiſts. And *2dly*, I ſhall conſider, what *Uſes* may be made of This meditation, in the government of our Life and Practice. SERM. VII.

I. In order to explain the Nature of this divine Attribute of Immutability, and ſhow diſtinctly *wherein* it *conſiſts*; it is to be obſerved, that both in Reaſon and Scripture God is conſidered as Unchangeable, upon *different Accounts* and in very *different Reſpects*.

1ſt. In reſpect of his *Eſſence*, God is abſolutely unchangeable, becauſe his Being is neceſſary, and his Eſſence Self-exiſtent: For whatever *neceſſarily* Is; as it cannot but *Be*, ſo it cannot but *continue* to be *invariably what it is*. That which depends *upon* Nothing, can be affected *by* Nothing, can be *acted upon* by Nothing, can be *changed* by Nothing, can be *influenced* by no *Power*, can be *impaired* by no *Time*, can be *varied* by no *Accident*. The Scripture does not often enter into the philoſophical part of This Speculation, but yet very emphatically expreſſes it in the *Name* which is given to God both in the Old Teſtament and in the New. In the Old Teſtament, God himſelf declared it to *Moſes*, Exod. iii. 14, *Thus ſhalt thou ſay unto the children of Iſrael*, I AM *has ſent me unto you*. And in the New Teſtament, St. *John* ſets it forth in the beginning of his Prophecy, *Rev.* i. 4. *Grace be unto you and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come. Other* things alſo *Are*, and *have been*, and *ſhall be:* But becauſe what they *have been*, might have been *otherwiſe*; and what they *Are*, might as poſſibly *not have been at all*; and what they *ſhall be*, may

SERM. VII.

may be very *different from what Now is*; therefore of *Their* changeable an dependent eſſence, which to day may be *one thing*, and to morrow *another thin* and the next day poſſibly *nothing at all*; of ſuch a dependent and changeab eſſence, compared with the invariable exiſtence of God, it *ſcarce* deſerves to b affirmed that it Is. And 'tis very remarkable, that in the paſſage now cite *He which is, and which was, and which is to come*, the words in the Origin are placed in a very unuſual conſtruction, a conſtruction no-where elſe foun in the whole New Teſtament, nor perhaps in any other Book; but very ſuitab to ſuch a ſingular occaſion; ſo as to ſignify, Not barely, He which *is*, *and wa and is to come*, (for That *may* perhaps, in *Some* ſenſe, be affirmed alſo of ſom *other* Beings,) but it ſignifies, *He* whoſe Being (or whoſe proper *Name* a

ἀπὸ τοῦ ὢν, &c. *Character*) is, eſſentially and invariably, *which Is, and Was, and is to come*. A This expreſſion is very agreeable to the Sublimity of the Prophetick Style.

ἀφθάρτῳ. *other* places, the Scripture ſets forth the ſame thing, only *in more eaſy and p pular* expreſſions: Stiling God, *the King immortal*, 1 Tim. i. 17; Which *on hath Immortality*, ch. vi. 16. that is, who *only* hath it *immutably and indepe dently:* The *incorruptible* God, Rom. i. 23. and, *from everlaſting to everlaſtin* (that is, by an unchangeable eſſence,) thou art *God*, Pſ. xc. 2. All *other* thin are changeable and periſhable; even the Frame of the Heavens themſelves abov

Pſ. cii. 26. and the Foundations of the Earth beneath; *They all ſhall periſh, yea all of the ſhall wax old like a garment; as a veſture ſhalt thou change them, and they ſh be changed; But* Thou *art the Same, the* Same through *all* generations, and *b yond* all generations ſtill unchangeably the *ſame*.

2*dly*. In reſpect of his *Perfections* likewiſe, as well as his *Eſſence*, God is a ſolutely *unchangeable*. Concerning *thoſe* Perfections which flow *neceſſarily* fro his Eſſence, and depend not on his *Will*, this is Self-evident, becauſe wha ever *neceſſarily* flows from any Cauſe or Principle, muſt likewiſe of neceſſity as invariable, as the Cauſe or Principle from which it neceſſarily proceeds. This kind, are the Power, the Knowledge, the Wiſdom, and the other *natur* Attributes of God, which having no dependence even upon his *own Will*, a more than his very Being it ſelf has; 'tis plain they can *much leſs* be ſubject any Alteration, from any *other* Cauſe or Power whatſoever. Concerning tho *other* Perfections, the Exerciſe whereof depends upon his *Will*; ſuch are h Juſtice, Veracity, Goodneſs, Mercy, and all other *moral* Perfections; the a ſolute Immutability of *theſe*, is not indeed ſo obvious and ſelf-evident; becau it depends on the unchangeableneſs, not only of his *Eſſence*, but of his *Will* al Nevertheleſs, upon careful conſideration, the unchangeableneſs of *Theſe* likewi will no leſs certainly appear: Becauſe in a Being who always knows what right to be done, and can never poſſibly be deceived, or awed, or tempte or impoſed upon; his *general Will* or *Intention*, of doing always what is b and moſt fit and right, will in reality, though not upon the *ſame* grou of natural *Neceſſity*, yet in event, and upon the whole, be as *certainly and tr ly unchangeable*, as his very Eſſence it ſelf. With great reaſon therefore do the Scripture thus ſpeak of his *Juſtice and Veracity*, Pſ. cxvii. 2. *The* Truth *the Lord endureth* for ever; and *Pſ.* cxi. 3, 5, 7, 8, *His* righteouſneſs *endure* for ever; *he will* ever *be mindful of his* covenant; *The works of his hands a verity and judgment, all his commandments are* ſure; *They ſtand* faſt *for* ever a ever, *and are done in* Truth *and Uprightneſs*. And concerning his *Mercy a Goodneſs*, Pſ. xxxvi. 5. *Thy* Mercy, *O Lord, is in the Heavens, and thy Faithfu neſs reacheth unto the clouds; Thy* righteouſneſs *is like the ſtrong mountains, t judgments are like the great deep*. And the Apoſtle St. *James* repreſents this us under a very elegant Similitude, ch. i. 17. *Every good and perfect Gift*, ſai he, *cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is* no variableneſs *neith* ſhadow of turning. The Compariſon is extremely elegant, drawn from the co ſideration of That which in corporeal things is the leaſt ſubject to chang *viz.* the Sun ſhining in the Heavens. The *Sun*, is the greateſt, the moſt r gular, the moſt ſtable and conſtant Diſpenſer of Light and Heat and fruitf influences, upon the whole Face of This inferior World; yet is his influen varied by different Motions, by Days and Nights, by Winter and Summe by Clouds and Shadows, and by alterations within its own Body. But *Go*

th

the *Father* of ſpiritual *Light*, the Author and Diſpoſer of all good and perfect Gifts, has in him no Motion, no Uncertainty, no Alteration of any of his Perfections, *no Variableneſs neither ſhadow of turning.* SERM. VII.

3*dly*, As God is unchangeable in his *Eſſence*, and in the *general Perfections* of his *Nature*; ſo is he alſo in the *particular Decrees and Purpoſes* of his *Will*; and ſo likewiſe in his *Laws*, in his *Promiſes*, and in his *Threatnings*. The Reaſon is; becauſe having all *Power* and all *Knowledge*, he can never reſolve upon any thing, which ſhall be either not *poſſible*, or not *reaſonable*, to be accompliſhed. All *finite* Beings are frequently forced to change their Deſigns; becauſe they often find it *impoſſible* to finiſh what they began, or *unreaſonable* to purſue their firſt Intention: But in *God*, theſe things have no place.

He is unchangeable in all his *Decrees and Purpoſes*; becauſe having all things in his Power, and comprehending all things in his Fore-knowledge, he can by no Force be over-ruled; he can by no ſurprize or unexpected accident be prevented; he can by no unforeſeen Alteration in the reaſons of things be himſelf changed in his Purpoſe. *The Council of the Lord ſtandeth for ever, and the thoughts of his Heart from generation to generation*, Pſ. xxxiii. 11. *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his Soul deſireth, even That he doth*, Job. xxiii. 13. Some have from theſe paſſages attempted to deduce the doctrine of abſolute Predeſtination; that becauſe the Decrees and Purpoſes of God are unchangeable, therefore Mens Salvation, or Condemnation, does not at all depend on any Works in their own Power. And indeed, were there any ſuch Decree, it could not be denied but it would be unchangeable, and conſequently that All Religion were vain. But the *Truth* is, that the Scripture mentions no *ſuch* Decree at all; and therefore men need not be concerned about the Unchangeableneſs of That, which has no Being. The Decree of God; is not that This or That particular perſon ſhall neceſſarily be ſaved or periſh; (For then What need, or what Uſe would there be of a day of Judgment?) But his Decree is, that Faith and Obedience, in whomſoever it is found, ſhall lead to Salvation; and Diſobedience on the contrary, to Deſtruction: And *This* Decree is indeed, like all his other Purpoſes, abſolutely unalterable.

Again, in his *Laws* likewiſe, that is, in the uniform Intention of all his Commandments, God is perfectly *unchangeable*; becauſe they are always founded on the ſame immutable *reaſons*, the eternal Differences of Good and Evil, the original nature of Things, and univerſal Equity; and they always tend to the ſame regular *End*, the Order and Happineſs of the whole Creation. Of This, the Law of *Nature* was the primary Inſtitution; the Law of *Moſes*, was the typical or figurative Repreſentation; and the Goſpel of *Chriſt*, its completion or perfect Reſtoration. And this is the meaning of that paſſage of the Apoſtle, *Heb.* xiii. 8, *Jeſus Chriſt the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever.* That this is here ſpoken, not of the *Perſon*, (though in *That* ſenſe alſo it is true; but that it is *here* ſpoken, not of the *Perſon*) but of the *Law* of Chriſt, appears from the words immediately following, with which it is connected; *Be not carried away with divers and ſtrange* doctrines; for *Jeſus Chriſt is the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever*; his Doctrine is, eternally and unchangeably, One and the ſame. *The Goſpel*, ſaith the ſame Apoſtle, *Gal.* iii. 8. was *preached before unto Abraham:* which *Goſpel, the Law that was given four hundred years after, could not diſannul*; but was *added* only *becauſe of Tranſgreſſion*, (that is, becauſe of the infirm and childiſh ſtate of the People of the *Jews*) *till the promiſed Seed ſhould come:* till the more explicit declaration of that Faith, by which alone both *Abraham* and all good men from the beginning of the world *were*, as all good Chriſtians *ſhall be* even unto the End, uniformly juſtified; that is, by the *everlaſting Goſpel*, Rev. xiv. 6. the eternal and *unchangeable Law of God.*

Further; in his *Covenants or Promiſes*; (ſuch as are not declared to be conditional, and annexed to certain particular Qualifications,) God is likewiſe perfectly *unchangeable.* The Reaſon is, becauſe *Covenants or Promiſes of this kind* are founded upon ſuch grounds as cannot be altered; even upon the original, fixt and permanent Deſigns and Intentions of all-wiſe Providence. Thus, concerning the Promiſe made to *Abraham*; *God*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *Heb.* vi. 13. *be-*

SERM. VII.

cauſe he could ſwear by no greater, ſware by himſelf; ----- *confirming it by an Oath, to ſhow unto the Heirs of Promiſe the* immutability *of his Counſel.* The reaſon of which unchangeable reſolution was, becauſe the giving that land to *Abraham* and to his Seed after him, included the Promiſe both of the *temporal Jeruſalem*, for an Habitation of the true Worſhippers of God *here*; and of the *heavenly Jeruſalem*, wherein both *Abraham* himſelf perſonally and all his ſpiritual Poſterity were to be made happy *hereafter*. Of the ſame Nature is That Declaration concerning *all Iſrael*, Num. xxiii. 19. *God is not a man, that he ſhould lye; neither the Son of Man, that he ſhould repent: Hath he ſaid, and ſhall he not do it? or hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bleſs; and he* hath *bleſſed, and I cannot reverſe it.* The reaſon of This, is, becauſe it was a declaration of the whole Scheme of Providence in eſtabliſhing a Standard of true Religion among that People: which was a matter not to be altered by any mens future behaviour: It was one of thoſe things, which God might juſtly, and without wrong to any man, determine *at firſt* by his abſolute Supreme Power; (as in the caſe of *Jacob* and *Eſau*, he declared, *before either of them was born or had done either good or evil*, that the poſterity of *the elder ſhould ſerve* that of *the younger*;) and which Deſign *afterwards*, in the *whole courſe* of his Providence, he might *continue* to accompliſh in the ſame manner, however *different* men's behaviour might be under the ſeveral periods of *That diſpenſation*. And This is the true Meaning of that other difficult Text in St. *Paul*, Rom. xi. 28, 29. *As concerning the Goſpel, they* (the Nation of the *Jews*) *are enemies for your ſake; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the Fathers ſakes; For the Gifts* (theſe Gifts) *and Calling of God are without Repentance.* Some have applied *Theſe* words alſo to the doctrine of Predeſtination: But their being ſpoken expreſly of *whole Nations*, and not of *ſingle perſons*, evidently demonſtrates the contrary; and ſhows at the ſame time the reaſon of the immutability of theſe Gifts of God, namely becauſe they are not moral Gifts or Graces to particular Perſons, but parts of the general Scheme and Deſign of Providence in the Government of the World thro' ſucceſſive Ages. Of the ſame kind, is that promiſe of God to *David*, Pſ. lxxxix. 21. *I have found David my Servant, with my Holy oyl have I anointed him*; ----- *my mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my Covenant ſhall ſtand faſt with him*; ----- *If his children forſake my Law, and walk not in my judgments; Then will I viſit their tranſgreſſion with the rod, and their iniquity with ſtripes; Nevertheleſs my loving kindneſs will I not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer my Truth to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips; Once have I ſworn by my Holineſs, that I will not lye unto David.* Theſe Promiſes, were unalterable Prophecies of a Meſſiah to ariſe out of the Seed of *David*; As had in like manner before been promiſed to *Adam* and the Patriarchs, to *Abraham*, to *Iſaac*, and to *Jacob*. And therefore 'tis a weak thing in the modern *Jews*, to alledge that their *Sins* have prevented the coming of the Meſſiah; which was one of the original great Conſtitutions of Providence, and a Promiſe of God not to be repented.

Laſtly, God is *unchangeable* likewiſe in his *Threatnings*; that is to ſay, in ſuch *Threatnings*, as are not *merely perſonal*; For of *Thoſe* I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak preſently: But in his *general Threatnings*, as well as in his *Promiſes*, God is abſolutely *unchangeable*. The Reaſon is, becauſe, as his Love to Virtue and Goodneſs is unalterable, ſo his Hatred to Vice is irreconcileable; and alſo becauſe theſe Threatnings are often *Prophetick* parts of the general Scheme of Providence. Thus in the caſe of *Saul*; tho' upon his repenting in ſome meaſure, the Prophet conſented to honour him for the preſent before the Elders of his people; yet in the matter of the Kingdom as to the Time to come, the Threatning of God, being more a prophecy of the great Counſels of Providence, than a perſonal Threatning to *Him*, could not be reverſed: 1 *Sam.* xv. 28. *The Lord has rent the Kingdom of Iſrael from thee this day, and hath given it to a Neighbour of thine that is better than Thou; And alſo the Strength of Iſrael will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man, that he ſhould repent.* In like manner, the Diſperſion and Captivity of the *Jewiſh* Nation for ſome Ages before and after the Coming of the Meſſiah; at the ſame time that it was a juſt Puniſhment for *their particular* Sins, being moreover *in general* one of the great Events or Diſpenſations of Providence in the whole Oeconomy or Government of Mankind upon Earth; is always

ſpoken

ſpoken of by the Prophets, as a Judgment which God would indeed *put an* end *to* upon the Repentance of that Nation, but the *Sentence and* Execution *whereof he would not reverſe*, Jer. iv. 27. *Thus hath the Lord ſaid, The whole Land* ſhall *be deſolate*: —— *I have purpoſed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.* And *Ezek.* xxiv. 14. *I the Lord have ſpoken it, it* ſhall *come to paſs, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I ſpare, neither will I repent.* And therefore very remarkable is the Anſwer that was given to good King *Joſiah*; when, being grieved at theſe Threatnings, he ſent to inquire of the Lord; 2 *Kings* xxii. 15, *Thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael, Tell the man that ſent you,* —— *I* will *bring evil upon this place, and upon the* inhabitants thereof; ----- *But to the King* himſelf ----- *thus ſhall ye ſay*; ----- *Becauſe thine Heart was tender, and thou haſt humbled thy ſelf before the Lord, behold therefore I will gather* Thee *unto thy Fathers* ----- *in peace, and* thine *eyes ſhall not ſee all the Evil that I will bring upon this place.* And the Account given of this matter in the following chapter, is no leſs remarkable; *ch.* xxiii. 25, 26; and *ch.* xxiv. 4. *Like him was there no King before him, that turned to the Lord with all his Heart,* ----- *neither after him aroſe there any like him; Notwithſtanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceneſs of his great wrath, wherewith his Anger was kindled againſt Judah, becauſe of all the provocations that Manaſſeh had provoked him withal,* ----- *and for the innocent blood that he ſhed, which the Lord* would not *pardon.*

SERM. VII.

Againſt all that has been hitherto ſaid, concerning the Unchangeableneſs of God, there is One very obvious, and great *Objection*; drawn from thoſe Texts of Scripture, which ſeem to ſpeak of God in a very different manner from thoſe already cited, and to repreſent him on the contrary as very frequently repenting and changing his Purpoſe. Thus 'tis recorded, *Gen.* vi. 5. that when *God ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the Earth,* ---- *it* repented *the Lord that he had made man on the Earth; and it grieved him at his Heart;* and 1 *Sam.* xv. 35, that *the Lord* repented, *that he had made Saul King over Iſrael;* and *Num.* xiv. 30, 34, concerning a whole generation of the people of *Iſrael, Doubtleſs* (ſaith he) *ye ſhall* not *come into the land, concerning which I ſware to make you dwell therein, and ye ſhall know my breach of promiſe,* or (as it is better rendered in the margin) *Ye ſhall know the altering of my Purpoſe:* And *Jer.* xxvi. 13. *Amend your ways and your doings,* ----- *and the Lord will* repent *of the evil that he hath pronounced againſt you:* And *Jonah* iii. 10. *God ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God* repented *of the Evil that he had ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not.* Theſe paſſages (I ſay) may at firſt ſight ſeem to be a very ſtrong *Objection*, againſt what has been before laid down concerning the Unchangeableneſs of God in all his Purpoſes. But the *Anſwer* likewiſe, from what has been before ſaid, is plain and obvious. *Thoſe* Declarations of the Deſigns and Purpoſes of God, which are *Prophetick* of the great Events of Providence, are *in themſelves* abſolutely *fix'd and unalterable*; becauſe the Wiſdom of God could not poſſibly be deceived, in the original Deſign and Intention of appointing them: But *theſe* Promiſes and Threatnings, which are merely *perſonal*, either to any particular man, or to any Number of men, are always *conditional*; becauſe the Wiſdom of God thought fit to make *Theſe* depend on the Behaviour of Men; and the Immutability of God with regard to *Theſe*, does not conſiſt in the unalterableneſs of the Things themſelves, but in the unchangeableneſs of *the Condition* upon which they are to be performed. The *Rule*, is univerſal and unchangeable; *Jer.* xviii. 7, *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation,* ----- *to pull down and to deſtroy it; if that nation* ----- *turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them: And at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation,* ----- *to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my ſight,* ----- *then I will repent of the good, wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them.* The *Expreſſions*, of God's *repenting, grieving*, and the like; are only *figurative*, in condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of our Apprehenſions; ſignifying, not any *Change* in *God* himſelf, but only a *Difference of the Event* with regard to *Us*. God's Affection towards Good or Evil, towards Virtue or Vice, is *therefore* uniform and unchangeable; becauſe his Promiſes and Threatnings *invariably* follow theſe Diſpoſitions, through all the Changes of mens perſonal behaviour. Thus Good Parents and Princes, without any Change in *Themſelves*, encourage or diſcourage their reſpective children, or ſubjects, according as *They* change

SERM. VII.

change their behaviour for the better or the worſe. Thus *Laws themſelves*, which can have no *Affection*, nor Change of *Affection*, towards one perſon or another; yet vary their *Effect*, themſelves remaining unvaried; and bring rewards or puniſhments, according to the different behaviour of the perſon upon whom they are executed. The only difference in This caſe, is; that Laws made by the beſt *human* Wiſdom, can take *no* notice of the *Repentance* of great Malefactors in the caſe of capital Crimes; becauſe 'tis impoſſible for human Wiſdom to diſcern when ſuch Repentance is ſincere, and conſequently 'tis altogether unſafe to truſt to any pretences of That kind: But God who ſees the inmoſt Diſpoſitions of Mens Hearts, judges always according to the reality of thoſe Diſpoſitions, and diſpenſes his Rewards or Puniſhments accordingly. And in This, he acts uniformly, without Change or Variation. As the ſame Fire, with one unvaried Action, conſumes combuſtible matter, but purifies and refines Gold; and the ſame Sun, with one continual Heat, melts one ſort of Bodies, and hardens another; ſo God, without any change or alteration in himſelf, puniſhes the wicked when they ſo continue, and ſhows compaſſion towards the ſame perſons when they become truly and ſincerely penitent.

II. The *Uſes* of this Diſcourſe, by way of Application, concerning the Immutability of God, are briefly as follows,

1*ſt*, THE *Unchangeableneſs* of God's *natural Perfections* and the *Promiſe* of Him to whom thoſe Perfections ſo invariably belong, is to *good men* at all times the greateſt poſſible ſecurity, that they ſhall not finally fail to be Happy. When the World, and all things that are therein, ſhall fail; the Power of God, his Wiſdom, his Goodneſs, his *Love* of Virtue, are Perfections which can never fail in *themſelves*; and his *Promiſe* ſecures the Application of them to *Us*; if we continue to live in obedience to his Commands. *Heb.* vi. 13, 17. *When God made Promiſe to Abraham; becauſe he could ſwear by no greater, he ſware by himſelf;* ---- *Wherein God willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the heirs of Promiſe the immutability of his counſel, confirmed it with an Oath; That by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lye, we might have a ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope ſet before us.* And *Tit.* i. 2, *The Hope of eternal life, which God, that* cannot lye, *promiſed before the world began.* The ſame Inference is drawn by the Prophet in the words of the Text; *I am the Lord, I change not,* (my Compaſſion, my Promiſe, is immutable;) therefore *ye Sons of Jacob are not conſumed.* And by the Pſalmiſt, *Pſ.* xxxiii. 11, 12, *The Counſel of the Lord ſtandeth for ever;* Therefore *Bleſſed is the Nation whoſe God is the Lord, and the people whom he has choſen for his own inheritance.* And *Pſ.* xxxvi. 6, 7, *Thy righteouſneſs is, like the ſtrong mountains;* ---- Therefore *the children of men put their truſt under the ſhadow of thy wings.*

2*dly*, The *Threatnings* of him whoſe nature and perfections are *unchangeable*, ought to be a perpetual Terror to *impenitent Sinners*. He will by no means clear the Guilty, nor can by any application be reconciled to Sin. No Bribe, no Force, no Artifice, no Interceſſion, no length of Time, can change his Hatred towards unrighteous *Actions*; or hinder him, without true Repentance and effectual Amendment, from puniſhing unrighteous *Men*. His Wiſdom, his Honour, his Goodneſs, obliges him to preſerve the Dignity of his Laws and Government; and 'tis therefore a dreadful thing for willing Sinners to fall into the hands of the ever-living, ever unchangeable God.

3*dly*, On the contrary, the conſideration of the *Mercy* of Him, who is *unchangeable* in his Perfections, ought to be a no leſs conſtant incouragement to ſuch as are truly *penitent*, and ſincerely deſirous to amend. Men, are oft times weak and paſſionate, and implacable when provoked: But the Mercy and Compaſſion of *God*, is, like all the other perfections of his Nature, unchangeably ready to extend itſelf towards thoſe, who at any time become capable Objects of it. And from the ſame conſideration, appears likewiſe the abſolute and indiſpenſable *Neceſſity of Repentance:* For as the Mercy of God is always open *to* the penitent, ſo *from* it the impenitent are irreverſibly excluded. 'Tis impoſſible, that *God* ſhould change: The Sinner *may* change, and *muſt* do ſo, or periſh.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*; As *Unchangeableneſs* is an Excellency and Perfection in *God*; ſo in *Man*, on the *contrary*, to *change* his opinion and manner of acting, when there

is

is juſt cauſe ſo to do, is one of *his* greateſt Commendations. And the Reaſon in Both, is the ſame; namely, that Right and Truth are to be followed unchangeably. As therefore *God*, who *never can* err in his judgment of Right and Truth, muſt conſequently be unchangeable in his acting according to it; ſo, for the very ſame Reaſon, frail and fallible *Man*, whenever he finds he *has* erred from what is True and Right, muſt immediately return unto it. But in things certainly and demonſtrably *True*; or which, upon the fulleſt and moſt careful examination, are found evidently and undeniably *Good*; in theſe things, men ought to be firm and ſtedfaſt without wavering; and *not like children, toſſed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the ſlight of men, and cunning craftineſs whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* For *Jeſus Chriſt*, i. e. the Doctrine or Goſpel of Chriſt, *is the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever*; *Be not* therefore (ſays the Apoſtle) *carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace.* And our Saviour himſelf, *Rev.* iii. 15, *I would thou wert cold or hot*, and not *luke-warm*: The meaning is; If men pretend to make profeſſion of Religion at all, they ought to be, not *lukewarm*, not careleſs and indifferent, in matters of Religion; but they ought to be *zealous*, that is, not, *hot in their* paſſions, not, *fierce and contentious about diſputable* opinions, *about things uncertain and indifferent*; but zealous and ſtedfaſt in the purſuit and practice of what is clearly and indiſputably Juſt and Right. I conclude with the exhortation of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 58, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

SERMON VIII.

Of the OMNIPRESENCE of GOD.

1 KINGS viii. 27.

But will God indeed dwell on the Earth? behold, the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain thee:----

SERM. VIII.

AS the *Eternity* of God ſignifies his continued exiſtence, through all the periods of boundleſs *Duration*: ſo his *Immenſity* or *Omnipreſence*, ſignifies his being equally preſent in every Part of the infinite *Expanſion* of the Univerſe. In diſcourſing upon which Attribute of the Divine Nature, I ſhall *1ſt*, indeavour briefly to prove the Truth of the Doctrine itſelf, that God *muſt be* immenſe or omnipreſent. *2dly*, I ſhall offer ſome particular Obſervations concerning the Nature and Circumſtances of This Divine Perfection. And *3dly*, I ſhall conſider (which is the *moſt* important of all,) how This Meditation, may become uſeful to us in influencing our Practice.

Firſt, In order to prove the Truth of the Aſſertion itſelf, that God muſt of Neceſſity be Omnipreſent; 'tis to be obſerved, (and it may eaſily be apprehended even by the meaneſt Capacities,) that if Being or Exiſtence be at all a Perfection, (as it manifeſtly *is* the Foundation of all other Perfections,) it will follow, that in like manner as *continuing* to exiſt through larger periods of *Time*, ſo alſo *Extent* of Exiſtence (and conſequently of Power) through larger portions of *Space*, is the having a greater degree of this Perfection. And as That Being, which is abſolutely perfect, muſt with regard to Duration be *Eternal*; ſo, in reſpect of *Greatneſs*, it muſt likewiſe be *Immenſe*. Otherwiſe its Perfections will be limited; which is the Notion of *Imperfection*: And, by being ſuppoſed to be *Finite* in *Extent*, the Perfection of its Power will as totally be deſtroyed, as it would be, ſuppoſing it to be *Temporary* in *Duration*. For as Any Being, which is not *Always*; at the *time* when it is not, is as if it never was; ſo whatever Being is not *every-where*; in *thoſe* places where it is not, is (to all the purpoſes of Power and Activity) as if it had no Being in any place at all. For no Being can act *Where* it

it is not, any more than *When* it is not. Power, without Exiſtence, is but an empty word without any reality; and the ſcholaſtick Fiction of a Being *acting* in all places, without being *preſent* in all places, is either making the Notion of God an expreſs contradiction, or elſe a ſuppoſing him *ſo* to act by the miniſtry of Others, as not to be Himſelf preſent to underſtand and know what they Do. He therefore that will frame to himſelf a true Idea of this Divine Attribute, (ſo far as finite Underſtanding can comprehend what is Infinite;) muſt in This, as in others of the divine Perfections, form in his Mind the *Notion* at the ſame time, and by the ſame ſteps, by which he aſcends to the *Proof* of it. And That, in the preſent caſe, is more diſtinctly as follows. All *created* Beings are, by the neceſſary condition of their Nature, finite and circumſcribed. They can be preſent but in one certain determinate place at once, and they can move but within certain bounds in certain periods of time. The larger thoſe Limits are, in which any Creature can *be* and *act*; which it can either at once fill with its preſence, or ſupply with its activity, ſwiftneſs and vigour; ſo much the greater ſhare has it of this Kind of Perfection: And, by inlarging this perfection to its utmoſt Poſſibility, we muſt conſequently aſcribe to God, the *moſt Perfect* Being *Infinity* or *Immenſity*: That is, we muſt conceive of him, as of a Being that fills all things, and that contains all things within his own boundleſs Nature; that is not defined or circumſcribed by any Space, but co-exiſts with, and is preſent with all things, and infinitely beyond whatever we can imagine, without limits and without bounds; *in whom* (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it,) *we live, and move, and have our Being*, and in whom all things ſubſiſt. SERM. VIII.

Again: It cannot but be evident, even to the *meaneſt* Capacity, upon *careful* conſideration; that He who *made* all things, as he could not but be *before* the things that he made, ſo it is not poſſible but he muſt be *preſent* alſo, with the things that he made and governs. For things could not be made without the actual preſence of the Power that made them; nor can things ever be governed with any Certainty, unleſs the Wiſdom, that governs them, be preſent with them. Whatever Arguments therefore prove the *Being* of God, and his unerring *Providence*; muſt all be underſtood to prove equally likewiſe his actual *Omnipreſence*.

Laſtly: He who exiſts by *Neceſſity of Nature*, (which is the Character of God;) 'tis manifeſt muſt exiſt in all places alike. For abſolute Neceſſity, is at *all times* and in *all places* the ſame. Whatever can be abſent at *any* time, may be abſent at *all* times; and whatever can be abſent from *one* place, may be abſent from *another*; and conſequently can have no Neceſſity of exiſting at all. He therefore, who exiſts neceſſarily, muſt neceſſarily exiſt *Always and every-where*: that is, as he muſt in duration be Eternal, ſo he muſt alſo in Immenſity be Omnipreſent.

The Truth of the Doctrine itſelf, that God muſt of Neceſſity be Immenſe or Omnipreſent, being thus briefly proved by ſuch Arguments as are moſt obvious and univerſally intelligible; I proceed now in the

IId place, To offer ſome particular *Obſervations*, concerning the Nature and Circumſtances of this divine Attribute. And,

1*ſt*. 'Tis to be obſerved, that this Attribute of *Omnipreſence*, as 'tis conſtantly aſcribed to God in *Scripture*, ſo is it in *Reaſon* likewiſe ſo plain and obvious, that the generality of Moral Writers even among the *Heathens* themſelves, have not been wanting to aſſert it clearly and without heſitation. The only difficulty has been, in explaining the particular *Manner* of our apprehending or conceiving it. Concerning which, the Schoolmen have preſumed to aſſert with great Confidence, that the Infinity of God is a *Point* only, and not a proper Immenſity; juſt as they fancy his Eternity to be an *Inſtant* only, and not a proper everlaſting Duration. But theſe Notions of theirs, as they are abſurd and unintelligible, ſo they are frivolous and vain. For the Excellency of the Perfections of God, does not conſiſt in impoſſible and contradictory Notions; but in true Greatneſs, Dignity, Majeſty, and Glory. And vain men, while they have affected to clog Religion with Abſurdities which could not be underſtood, have made its Doctrines, (as far as in

SERM. VIII.

in them lay,) not venerable, but ridiculous. The *Eternity* of God, does not conſiſt in making time paſt to be ſtill preſent, and future Time to be already come, (which is a manifeſt Inconſiſtency and Impoſſibility;) but it conſiſts in a true proper everlaſting duration, without Beginning and without End: And in like manner the *Immenſity* of God, does not conſiſt in making things to be where they are not, or not to be where they are, (which is the Effect of confounding the Notion of Place:) But it conſiſts in This; that whereas all finite Beings can be preſent but in One determinate Place at once; and corporeal Beings even in that One Place very imperfectly and unequally, to any Purpoſe of Power or Activity, only by the ſucceſſive Motion of different Members and Organs; The Supreme Cauſe on the contrary, being an uniform Infinite Eſſence, and comprehending all things perfectly in himſelf, is at all times equally preſent, both in his real Eſſence, and by the immediate and perfect Exerciſe of all his Attributes, to *every Point* of the boundleſs Immenſity, *as if it* were (not that it *really is*) all *but One ſingle Point*. And Thus the Scripture it ſelf always repreſents this matter. *Jer.* xxiii. 24, *Can any hide himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee them, ſaith the Lord? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth,* [ſaith the Lord?] Acts xvii. 27. *He is not far from every one of Us; For in Him we live, and move, and have our Being.* Job. xxiii. 8, *Behold, I go* forward, *but he is not there; and* backward, *but I cannot perceive him; On the* left *hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himſelf on the* right *hand, that I cannot ſee him.* And, in the words of the Text; *Will God indeed dwell on the Earth? Behold, the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee.*

2*dly*, 'Tis worthy of Obſervation, that this right Notion of the Omnipreſence of God, will very much aſſiſt us to form a juſt apprehenſion of the Nature of that *Providence*, which attends to and inſpects, not only the great Events, but even the minuteſt Circumſtances of every the ſmalleſt Action and Event in the World: Even *That* Providence, *without which not a Sparrow falls to the ground*, and by which *the very hairs of our Head are all numbred.* There have been Many, who though they fully acknowledged God's Government of the World, that is, his Power and Dominion over *all* things, and his *actual* Care and Concern for all the *great* and (as they think) moſt *material* Tranſactions in the Univerſe; yet have been apt to imagine, that *ſmall* and (as *they* fancy) *inconſiderable* things, are beneath his Care, and unworthy of his Attention. But This is a Miſtake ariſing from the Want of having a true Notion of the Divine Omnipreſence. For, That Perfection being once rightly underſtood, it cannot but be evident, that *all* things are alike eaſy to be inſpected by him as *any*, and the *minuteſt* things as much ſo as the *greateſt*; Nay, it will appear, that not only the ſmalleſt things are *not unworthy* his inſpection, but that even in the Nature of things 'tis abſolutely *impoſſible*, that He who is every where alike preſent, ſhould not obſerve and attend to every thing alike.

There is a certain determinate number or quantity of things, which every intelligent Creature, according to the proportion of its ſphere of Power and Activity, is able to attend to. And by This we may judge, that as Creatures of larger Capacities can obſerve a much greater number of things at one and the ſame time, than Beings of a lower rank can imagine it poſſible they ſhould; ſo God, who is preſent every where, can with infinitely greater Eaſe direct and govern *all things in the World at once*, than we can attend to thoſe *few* things which fall within the compaſs of our ſhort obſervation. By This alſo is removed the Objection of Thoſe, who think *Man* ſo ſmall and inconſiderable a part of the immenſe Univerſe, as that 'tis *beneath* the infinite Majeſty of God to take ſuch particular care of ſo mean a part of the Creation; to ſhow ſo great condeſcenſion towards ſuch inconſiderable Beings, as to ſend his own Son into the World on purpoſe, for their Redemption and Salvation. For they who thus object, do not conſider, that though Man is indeed a very inconſiderable part of the Works of God, when compared with the *whole* Creation; yet in *This Place*, and upon *this Earth*, he is the greateſt and moſt valuable of all. Wherefore while the Omnipreſence of God takes ſuitable care of all his *other* Creatures through the whole Univerſe, each in their proper ſtate; *in This place*, there is nothing *more* worthy of his care, than Man; nothing, *beſides* Man,

capable

capable of being taught to ſerve him, of being brought to Happineſs and Glory by him. SERM. VIII.

3*dly*, 'Tis here proper to obſerve, how weak have been the Scruples of ſuch perſons, who have been afraid to acknowledge the true Notion of the Divine Omnipreſence, leſt they ſhould ſeem to diminiſh from the Glory and Majeſty of God, by ſuppoſing him to be always actually preſent in all, even in *impure*, places. For they, who have raiſed to themſelves This difficulty, have not been aware, that as the Beams of the Sun are not at all ſoiled by the Matter they ſhine upon, and as the Purity and Holineſs of the Divine Nature is not in the leaſt diminiſhed by beholding all the *Wickedneſs* and *moral Impurity* which is acted in the World; ſo the Omnipreſent Eſſence of God is not at all affected, by any *Natural Impurity* of Things or Places whatſoever; it being the ſuperlative Excellency and Prerogative of his Nature, to *act* always upon all things every where, and it ſelf to *be acted upon* by Nothing. All the *ſenſible* Qualities of Matter, are merely *relative* to *Us* in our preſent ſtate, depending on the frame of *our* bodily Organs, and not being any thing really inherent in the Things themſelves. *We* behold only the outward Surfaces of things, and are affected only by the various Motions and Figures of certain ſmall parts of Matter; which by the help of *Microſcopes*, appear even to *Us* to be really very different in Themſelves from what our Senſes repreſent them; And to a Spirit, which ſees the inward real Eſſences of Things, and not the external ſenſible Images which affect *Us*, they have no ſimilitude at all with our Imaginations.

4*thly*, It will be here neceſſary to obſerve, How and in what ſenſe, God, who is every where neceſſarily alike preſent, is yet in Scripture ſo frequently repreſented to *be in Heaven:* As if He who is in *All* places, could be confined in *Any*; or any proper Habitation could be aſcribed to *Him*, whom (as *Solomon* declares) *the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain.* The True meaning therefore of God's being *in Heaven*, is to expreſs his *Height and Dignity*, not in *place*, but in *Power:* It being only a *ſimilitude* drawn into common Speech, from the Situation of things in Nature. As the Heavenly Bodies, the Sun and Stars, are High above us in *place*; and all Earthly Bleſſings depend on the Sun and Rain and the Deſcent of kindly Influences *literally From above:* ſo, by an eaſy *figure* of ſpeech, whatſoever is above us in *Power*, we are from hence uſed to repreſent as being above us in *Place.* Our Saviour, ſpeaking of the Pride and Greatneſs of *Capernaum*; *And thou Capernaum*, ſays he, *which art exalted unto Heaven, ſhalt be brought down to Hell*, Matt. xi. 23. The *Power and Dominion* of the King of *Babylon*, is thus ſet forth by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. xiv. 13, 14. *Thou haſt ſaid in thine heart, I will aſcend above the heights of the clouds, I will aſcend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the ſtars of God:* And the *Deſtruction* of his Monarchy is deſcribed after the like manner, ver. 12. *How art thou fallen from Heaven!* The Greatneſs and Dignity of *our Saviour's* Kingdom, is repreſented in Scripture, by his *ſitting* at the right hand *of God in the Heavenly places.* We know that God has no Hands, nor any Shape or Figure; But the meaning of Chriſt's ſitting on his right hand, is his being exalted next to him in Authority and Power. Thus therefore when we ſpeak likewiſe of God, even the inviſible Father himſelf, as being *in Heaven*; it muſt be underſtood to expreſs his *Supremacy*, not in *Place*, but in *Power and Dominion*; that He is the High and Holy One, Great and Glorious and Supreme above All. But there is alſo *another* reaſon of this expreſſion, of God's *being in Heaven:* And That is, To ſignify, that though of his real actual Preſence there is indeed no Confinement, yet of his Glory and Majeſty there is in that Place a particular and extraordinary *Manifeſtation.* Thus the Angel in the Book of *Tobit* repreſents it, ch. xii. 15. *I am* (ſaith he) *one of the ſeven holy Angels, which go in and out before the* Glory *of the Holy One:* And the Salutation to the Churches, which begins the Book of the *Revelation*, ch. i. 4. *Grace be unto you, and Peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the ſeven ſpirits which are before his* Throne. The real and proper *Preſence* of God, is equally in *all places:* But his *Throne*, his *Glory*, the place where the righteous ſhall ſee his *Face*, where they ſhall behold a more particular glorious Manifeſtation of Acts xvii. 27.

SERM. VIII.

his Power and Majeſty, is in *Heaven*. In like manner, here upon *Earth*; in places, where God has been pleaſed more particularly to manifeſt his Glory, to place his Name There, to receive There the Homage of his Servants; in thoſe places God in Scripture-phraſe is ſaid to *Be*: Not as if at the ſame time he was not equally in all other places alſo, but that in theſe places he choſe to manifeſt himſelf to his Servants, and There to receive homage from them. The Patriarch *Jacob*, concerning the place where he firſt ſaw the Viſion of Angels aſcending and deſcending out of Heaven; *Surely*, ſays he, *the Lord is in this place*, Gen. xxviii. 16; *and it ſhall be the Houſe of God*, ver. 22. In like manner in the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, the *Glory* of God *appeared* viſibly, 2 *Chron.* vii. 1. and there it alſo *was*, when it did *not* appear: and how He whom the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, did thus at that time dwell on Earth in a Temple made with hands, is well expreſſed by *Solomon*, 1 Kings viii. 30, *Hearken thou to the Supplication of thy Servant, and of thy people Iſrael, when they ſhall pray in*, or *towards, this place; and hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place*: The ſenſe is; God, who is preſent in *every place*, had appointed in *That place* to receive his Tribute of worſhip. And upon this Account, the *place* was eſteemed Holy, and reſpected accordingly: *Eccleſ.* v. 1. *Keep thy foot when thou goeſt to the houſe of God*. What the meaning is, of that unuſual Phraſe, *Keep thy foot*, is explained *Exod.* iii. 5. where God, appearing to *Moſes* in the Buſh, ſays thus unto him; *Put off thy ſhoes from off thy Feet, for the place whereon thou ſtandeſt is holy ground*. The Cuſtom or Manner in thoſe Eaſtern countries of ſhowing Honour or Veneration, was by uncovering the *Feet*, as our preſent method of ſhowing reſpect, is by uncovering the *Head*. Yet *God* himſelf was not preſent even then in the Buſh, any more than in all other places; but the place was made Holy by God's manifeſting his *Glory* there; for ſo St. *Stephen* expreſly tells us, *Acts* vii. 30. *there appeared to Moſes* an Angel *of the Lord, in a flame of Fire in the Buſh*. In like manner, God is ſaid in Scripture to *dwell in the* Hearts of good men: (*with him that is of an humble and contrite Spirit*, as the Prophet, *Iſ.* lvii. 15. expreſſes it;) And that the *Bodies* of them which are ſanctified, are *Temples* of the Holy Ghoſt, and *Temples* of God. Not by any confinement of the *Preſence* of God; but by his being pleaſed to ſhow forth his *Power and Influence*, in particular places, and to particular perſons.

Theſe Obſervations being premiſed, it remains in the

III*d* and *laſt* place, That I proceed to draw ſome uſeful Inferences from what has been ſaid; and to ſhow (which is the *moſt* material of all,) how this Meditation upon the divine Omnipreſence, may become uſeful to us in influencing our Practice.

1*ſt*, By This Character of Omnipreſence, the *True God of the Univerſe* is diſtinguiſhed from all Falſe Deities; and the Vanity of *Idolatry*, made plainly to appear. The Gods of the Nations *pretended* to be but Gods of *particular Countries*; as the Gods of *Henah, Ivah, and Sepharvaim*, 2 Kings xviii. 34. Or, of particular *parts* of the *ſame* Country; as *Gods of the Hills, and not of the Valleys*, 1 Kings xx. 28. That is, at moſt, Beings only of a limited preſence and Power: in reality, of no power or dominion at all; and commonly not ſo much as *any* Beings at all, but indeed mere Fictions and Imaginations of Men: *Lyes*, and *Lying Vanities*, as the Scripture frequently ſtiles them. But the True God, who *made* Heaven and Earth and all things that are therein, does by his preſence and power *inſpect alſo and govern* all things, in the *Whole* Heavens and in the *Whole* Earth.

And from the ſame conſideration, appears alſo the Vanity of making any Image of the *True* God, as well as of worſhipping *falſe* Gods. For by what Likeneſs can *he* be repreſented, the Majeſty of whoſe Preſence fills all things? And how fooliſh is it to think, that He *in whom we live and move and have our Being*, and whoſe *offſpring we* all (even all *rational* Beings) *are*, ſhould himſelf be *like unto Gold or Silver or Stone graven by art and man's device?* Acts xvii. 28, 29.

From hence likewiſe appears the Folly, of ſuch *Superſtitions* as that of *Balak*; who when *Balaam* was not permitted to curſe *Iſrael* from *one place*, carried him to *another*; ſaying, *Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto* another place; *peradventure*

SERM. VIII.

peradventure it will pleaſe God, that thou mayſt curſe me them from thence, *Num.* xxiii. 27. As if *God* ſaw things *differently* in *different places*; and would curſe *Iſrael* from *One* place, when he had bleſſed him from another.

From the ſame reaſon appears alſo the Vanity of *Saint-worſhip*, among Chriſtians: As if God, who being Omnipreſent hears all Prayer *Himſelf*, ſhould either need or regard the Interceſſion of Others, whom he hath *not expreſly*, (as in the caſe of *our Saviour*,) *appointed* to that High and Singular Office.

2*dly*, If God is Omnipreſent; from hence it follows that he is to be worſhipped and reverenced *every where*, in *private* as well as in publick. Honour is to be paid him, not only by *Angels* before his Throne in *Heaven*, and by the *congregation* publickly in his *Temple* on Earth, but alſo by *every man* ſingly in his moſt *private retirements*. *God dwelleth not in Temples made with hands*, Acts vii 47; and xvii. 24. that is, he is not preſent *there only*, but ſees alſo that more retired part of our behaviour, which is concealed from the world; and moſt of all approves that *private* piety and virtue, which cannot but proceed from a ſincere mind, becauſe it is not capable of the applauſe of Men. *When Thou prayeſt*, ſaith our Saviour, *enter into thy cloſet, and pray to thy Father which is in ſecret; and thy Father, which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly*, Matt. vi. 6.

Nay further; he beholds, not only our moſt private retirements, but alſo That which is ſtill much *more* ſecret than theſe, even the very Thoughts and Intents of our Hearts; that inward frame and diſpoſition of the mind, which may be diſſembled and entirely concealed from Men. Hence he is ſtiled in Scripture, the *Searcher of the Hearts and Reins*. Nor are there any Paſſages in Holy Writ, which do more worthily and magnificently repreſent him, than thoſe which thus deſcribe him, ſitting in the circuit of Heaven, and beholding at one view, all the Actions and all the Thoughts of all men throughout the whole World. 2 *Chron.* xvi. 9, *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to ſhow himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of them, whoſe* Heart *is perfect towards him*. Prov. xv. 3. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the Evil and the Good:* and ver. 11. *Hell and deſtruction are before him; how much more then, the Hearts of the children of Men!* And *Job* xxvi. 6. *Hell is naked before Him, and Deſtruction has no covering*. Which conſideration ſeriouſly meditated upon, will teach us to behave ourſelves at all times, and in all places, with circumſpection and care as in the preſence of our Judge, who continually obſerves us, and in due time *will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the Hearts*, 1 Cor. iv. 5. It will teach us to be as much afraid of committing any Sin or Impurity in Secret, as in the Face of the Sun and in the preſence of all mankind; conſidering that our moſt private miſdeeds are ſet before him, and *our ſecret ſins in the Light of his countenance*, Pſ. xc. 8. and that all the wickedneſs men now commit in private, ſhall one day be publiſhed before all the Inhabitants of Heaven and Earth. Laſtly, it will oblige us to govern even our very Thoughts and Deſires, and endeavour to keep them in continual Subjection to the Law of God; ſeeing that He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, ſearches even our very Hearts and Reins with his intimate preſence and all-ſeeing Eye. *O Lord, thou haſt ſearched me out, and known me; thou knoweſt my down-ſitting and mine up-riſing; thou underſtandeſt my Thoughts long before: Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and ſpieſt out all my ways*; Pſ. cxxxix. 1. And *Heb.* iv. 12, *The word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart: Neither is there any Creature that is not manifeſt in his Sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

3*dly*, and to conclude; From the conſideration of God's being Omnipreſent, it follows that his *Power* (as well as Knowledge,) is unlimited; to be *everywhere* relied on by Good men, and to be feared by Bad. As there is no *Time*, ſo neither is there any *Place*, where he is not at hand to protect his Servants. *Pſ.* xlvi. 1. *God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very* preſent *Help in Trouble; Therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be removed, and though the Mountains be carried*

SERM. VIII.

carried into the midſt of the Sea. And *Hab.* iii. 17, *Tho' the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines; tho' the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; though the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* But the moſt affectionate inſtance in the whole Scripture, of relying on the *omnipreſent* power of God, is that of *Jonah* in the Whale's belly, ch. ii. 2. *Out of the belly of Hell I cried, and thou heardeſt my Voice: In the midſt of the ſeas, the floods compaſſed me about; all thy billows and thy waves paſſed over me: The depth cloſed me round about, the weeds were wrapt about my Head: I went down to the bottoms of the Mountains, the Earth with her bars was about me for ever;* (It ſhould not have been tranſlated, *was about me* for ever; For That was not ſo; But, the *Earth with her* everlaſting *bars was about me:*) yet *I remembred the Lord, and my Prayer came unto thee.* The ſame conſideration ought likewiſe on the contrary to be a Terror to wicked and impenitent Sinners; that there is no poſſible place, where they can eſcape God's juſtice, or avoid the vengeance of omnipreſent wrath. The Anger of Man, as it is but of ſhort duration, ſo it can be but of ſmall *extent*, and may generally be fled from: But *from the Judgment of God*, ſays an excellent *Heathen-writer*, *let no man hope to be able to eſcape: For though you could deſcend into the very depth of the Earth, or fly on high to the extremities of the Heavens; yet ſhould you never eſcape the juſt judgment of God, either before or after Death.* The very ſame thing is expreſſed more emphatically by the Holy Ghoſt in Scripture, *Pſ.* cxxxix. 6, *Whither ſhall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither ſhall I go then from thy preſence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there; If I go down to Hell, thou art there alſo: If I take the wings of the morning,* that is, if I could flee as ſwift as the morning-light, which darts in a moment from under one end of Heaven to the other; *and remain in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea: even there alſo ſhall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand ſhall hold me.* Again; *Amos* ix. 2. *Though they dig into Hell, thence ſhall mine hand take them; tho' they climb up into Heaven, thence will I bring them down: Tho' they hide themſelves in the top of Carmel, I will ſearch them out thence; and tho' they be hid in the bottom of the ſea, thence will I command the ſerpent and he ſhall bite them.* And *Job* xxxiv. 21, *His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he ſeeth all his goings; There is no darkneſs, nor ſhadow of Death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves.* And to mention but one place more; *Eccluſ.* xvi. 17, *Say not thou, I will hide my ſelf from the Lord: Shall any remember me from above? I ſhall not be remembred among ſo many people: for what is* my *ſoul among ſuch an infinite number of Creatures?* Say not thou *thus*, ſaith he; For *behold, the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, the Deep and the Earth, and all that therein is, ſhall be moved when he ſhall viſit; The mountains alſo and foundations of the Earth ſhall be ſhaken with trembling, when the Lord looketh upon them: No heart* (ſays he) *can think upon theſe things worthily; and Who is able to conceive his ways?*

Plato.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Of the OMNIPOTENCE of GOD.

PSAL. cxlvii. 5.

Great is our Lord, and Great is his Power.

SERM. IX.

THIS Pſalm is an eloquent *compariſon* of the Greatneſs of the Power of God ſhown forth in the works of *Creation*, with the Greatneſs of the ſame Power ſhown forth in the works of *Providence* towards his Church and People. The works of *Creation* are ſet forth, ver. 4, 8, 16. *He telleth the number of the Stars, and calleth them all by their Names*; he *covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the Earth*; he *giveth ſnow like wool, and ſcattereth the hoar-froſt like aſhes*. The works of *Providence* are ſet forth, ver. 3, 6, 19, *The Lord doth build up Jeruſalem, and gather together the outcaſts of Iſrael*; *The Lord ſetteth up the meek, and bringeth the ungodly down to the ground*; *He ſheweth his word unto Jacob, his ſtatutes and ordinances unto Iſrael*. The *concluſion* drawn from *Both*, is, ver. 7. and in the words of the Text, *O ſing unto the Lord with thankſgiving, ſing praiſes upon the harp unto our God*; For *Great is our Lord, and Great is his Power*. In diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall firſt endeavour to ſhow briefly, that God *muſt of neceſſity be* All-powerful. 2*dly*, I will give ſome faint and imperfect repreſentations, ſome general and inadequate Idea, *wherein* the *Perfection* of this Power conſiſts. 3*dly*, I ſhall conſider *what* particulars are *not included* in the true notion even of *Omnipotence it ſelf*. And 4*thly*, I ſhall draw ſome practical *Inferences* from the whole.

I. That God *muſt* of neceſſity be *All-powerful*, is ſelf-evident. For ſince *all things* in the Univerſe were made by him, and depend upon Him for their very *Beings*; and all the *Powers* of all things are derived from him, and muſt conſequently be entirely ſubject to him; 'tis manifeſt that nothing can make any difficulty or reſiſtence to the execution of his Will, and therefore his Power muſt be abſolutely infinite. Where there is no *Being*, 'tis plain there can be no

SERM. IX.

Power: Now *all* things that *are* in the World, have *no other Being* than what depends on His pleaſure: There is therefore, and can be, in the Univerſe, *no Power* againſt *His*. This *precarious* Being, which *all* things derive from the mere Will of God, the Apoſtle elegantly deſcribes, *Rom.* iv. 17, by his *calling thoſe things which* be not, *as tho' they* were: And the unlimitedneſs of his Power *over* them, may on the contrary as truly be deſcribed, by his *looking on all things that* Are, *as tho' they* were not. But the truth of this Attribute of the divine Omnipotence, (that mighty *working whereby he is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf*,) is ſo evident to the common reaſon of mankind, that we need not ſo much ſeek for Arguments to prove and demonſtrate its reality, as we ought to endeavour to give lively and affecting deſcriptions of it, ſuch as may be proper to fill mens minds with a juſt ſenſe of the ſupreme Majeſty of God, and to excite in them accordingly reſolutions of Obedience to him. Such deſcriptions as theſe, the Scripture frequently affords us; great and moving deſcriptions of the Power of God, and ſuch as are naturally apt to produce in us the profoundeſt Humility and Reverence towards him. Thus *Job* ix. 4, *He is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength; Who has hardened himſelf againſt him, and has proſpered? which removeth the Mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in his anger: which ſhaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble: Which commandeth the Sun and it riſeth not, and ſealeth up the Stars: Which alone ſpreadeth out the Heavens, and treadeth upon the Waves of the Sea: Which doth great things paſt finding out, yea and wonders without number.* And ch. xxvi. 6. *Hell is naked before him, and deſtruction hath no covering: He ſtretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing: He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them: The Pillars of Heaven tremble, and are aſtoniſhed at his reproof: He divideth the Sea with his Power, and by his Underſtanding he ſmiteth thro' the Proud: Lo, theſe are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his Power, who can underſtand?* So likewiſe the eloquent prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. xiv. 27, *The Lord of Hoſts hath purpoſed, and who ſhall diſannul it? his hand is ſtretched out, and who ſhall turn it back?* And ch. xl. 12, *Who hath meaſured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the ſpan? and comprehended the duſt of the Earth in a meaſure? and weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the ſpirit of the Lord; or, being his Counſellor, has taught him? Behold, the Nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance; behold, he taketh up the Iſles as a very little thing: All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs than nothing and vanity: To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeneſs will ye compare unto him?* To mention but One paſſage more; *Dan.* iv. 34, *He that liveth for ever, whoſe dominion is an everlaſting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation; And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the Earth; and none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, what doſt thou?* Theſe are lively deſcriptions of *arbitrary* Power indeed; *arbitrary*, not in the Senſe that the *Tyrants* of This World have occaſioned that word to be uſed, when it ſignifies a Power of doing unreaſonable and unjuſt things, a Power of Violence and unrighteous Oppreſſion, a Power of acting according to mere Will and Pleaſure without Right or Reaſon; but in *God*, arbitrary or irreſiſtible Power, tho' it *is* indeed a Power of doing all things abſolutely without controul, yet it is *ſo* a Power of doing them, as that at the ſame time there is always with the notion of That Power, neceſſarily and inſeparably connected, an Idea of infinite Reaſon, Wiſdom and Goodneſs. And the reaſon *why* theſe notions are always inſeparably connected, when we think rightly of God, is becauſe, in *Him*, Acting according to his ſupreme *Will and Pleaſure*, does not ſignify, as it does among corrupt *men*, acting according to Will and Inclination without reaſon, but on the contrary it ſignifies always, acting according to *That* Will, which is influenced by *nothing* but the moſt perfect *Reaſon* only; which is the ſame thing, as if Will and Pleaſure could be ſuppoſed to have no place at all, and the Univerſe were governed by mere abſtract Reaſon and the Right of Things. For in *God*, Will and Reaſon are *one and the ſame* thing; or at leaſt go always

ſo together, *as if they* were but one thing; whereas in the Rulers of *this* world, they too often ſignify things contrary to each other: Governing according to *Law or Reaſon*, and governing according to *abſolute Will or Pleaſure*, being on *Earth* the two moſt *oppoſite* forms of Government, while in *Heaven* they are nothing but two different *Names*, of one and the ſame *Thing*.

If it be asked, *whence* this difference ariſes? the reaſon of it will appear, by conſidering *what* we mean, when we affirm that whatever *God* does, we are ſure is Right, becauſe He does it. Which is too often ſo underſtood, as if the *Power and Will* of God *made* that *to be* Right, which *is* ſo; and as if it might as eaſily have made the contrary *to become* Right. The Conſequence of which is, that there is really no difference between good and evil in the *Nature* of Things, but that *Will and Power* makes all the diſtinction: From whence tyrannical *Men*, who have *Power* to do what they *will*, think that *They* alſo conſequently have a Right to do ſo. But now this is not only not true with regard to *Men*, but even with regard to *God himſelf alſo* it is plainly a Miſtake: For, *not Power or Will*, but the Reaſon of Things only, is the Foundation of *Right*: And tho' *'tis* indeed certainly true, that whatever God does, we are ſure 'tis Right, becauſe he does it; yet the meaning of This, is not, that God's *doing or willing* a thing, *makes* it to be Right; but that *his* Wiſdom and Goodneſs is ſuch, that we may depend upon it, even *without* underſtanding it, that whatever he wills, was *in it ſelf* Right, *antecedent* to his willing it; and that he *therefore* willed it, *becauſe* it was Right. Wherefore though among *Men*, whoſe Wills are not always righteous, abſolute or arbitrary Power is the thing in the world the moſt to be deteſted, dreaded, and abhorred, as being the Sum total of the greateſt Calamities that God ever inflicted upon ſinful men in *This* World; yet the Notion of irreſiſtible and uncontroulable Power in *God*, where 'tis in conjunction with a perfect Underſtanding and with a righteous Will, juſtly excites in us *nothing* but ſuch a *Veneration and Awe*, ſuch a *Senſe* of *adorable* and incomprehenſible *Majeſty*, as naturally leads us to that *Adoration and Fear*, that *Honour*, *Duty*, *and Obedience* towards him, which is the great Principle and Foundation of all Religion.

Having thus briefly ſhown *in general*, that God *muſt* of neceſſity *be All-powerful*; I proceed now in the

II*d* place, To give *in particular* ſome faint hints and repreſentations, ſome little imperfect Idea, *wherein* the peculiar Exerciſe of this moſt perfect Power *conſiſts*, and *in what Inſtances* it has principally diſplayed it ſelf. And

1*ſt*, The Perfection of this Power appears, in its *giving* Being *originally* to *all* things, and in its governing *them continually* while they are in Being. That the World was not made by *Chance*, appears from the *Beauty and Uſefulneſs* of the things that are in it; and that it does not exiſt by *Neceſſity*, is evident from their *Variety*: For in the Neceſſity of *Fate*, there is no *Variety*; and in the confuſions of *Chance*, there is no *Beauty or Uſefulneſs*. The *Being* therefore of the World, is the *Effect* of the *Power* of God; and the *Variety* of finite Powers communicated to different *Creatures*, are a glorious demonſtration of the *infinite* Power of the *Creator*. And there is no better way, by which we can frame to our ſelves ſome faint Idea or Repreſentation of the *perfection* of that Power, than by conſidering in one general view the Number and Variety of *Effects*, it has produced in the Creation; how it has given *Being*, to all things; how it has *diverſified* that Being, under innumerable *Forms*, in the Compoſitions and Motions of *inanimate Matter*; how it has exalted the products of Matter, beyond all the imaginable Powers of its unactive nature, in the *Vegetation* and *Growth* of *Plants*; how it has indued with a *higher Principle* than can ariſe from Mechaniſm, the *Brute-creatures*, furniſhed with the Powers of Self-motion and the ſenſitive Life; how it has, in a much *more* wonderful manner, implanted in *Men* the Image of the divine Nature, even thoſe high Faculties of Underſtanding, Reaſon, and Will; and, beyond all theſe, which is the Supreme excellency of created Nature, made them capable of *Religion*, of knowing, worſhipping, obeying, and imitating their Maker. *Wonderful*, O Lord, are all thy works; and worthy *art thou to receive glory and honour and power; for thou haſt created all things, and for thy pleaſure they Are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11.

Nor

SERM. IX.

Nor does the Perfection of the divine Power appear more in having *created* things, than it does in *governing* them continually while they are in being: For he *upholdeth* all things by the word of his Power, and by his Providence does the Univerſe *ſubſiſt*. This is that Kingdom of God, which the Pſalmiſt deſcribes, *Pſ.* ciii. 19, *The Lord has prepared his Throne in Heaven, and his Kingdom ruleth over all*; and Pſ. cxlvii. 15, *He ſendeth forth his commandment upon Earth; and his Word runneth very ſwiftly.* And to this *natural* Kingdom of God; may well be applied thoſe words of St. *John* concerning his *ſpiritual* Kingdom, *Rev.* xix. 6, *I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, ------ ſaying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* To frame to ourſelves any *juſt* idea of this Power by which God *ruleth* over all, is abſolutely impoſſible; becauſe our conceptions are altogether finite, and our imagination extends but to a very few either objects or degrees of Power. But the beſt repreſentation we can form of it in our minds, is by conſidering, that the Powers of all things in the World put together, bear no proportion to His; and that the Reſiſtance of Univerſal Nature at once, would to Him be no Reſiſtance at all; who can withdraw from all things the foundation of all Power, even their very Being itſelf; ſo that all things are to *him*, as the Prophet *Iſaiah* elegantly expreſſes it, by the *higheſt Poſſible*, and yet not *too high* a figure; they are to *him*, ſaith he, leſs *than nothing and Vanity*. The diſproportion can be ſet forth by no ſimilitude: For, to the greateſt Strength, even the thin Air makes ſome reſiſtance; and the fineſt web gives ſome impediment even to the greateſt ſwiftneſs: But to the Power of *God*, nothing makes *any* oppoſition: Nothing, except the perverſe *Will* of wicked Spirits and wicked Men; whom, being indued with freedom, God does not think fit to influence by *Power*, but by the *moral and* rational *motives only of Promiſes and Threatnings*. Whereever his *Power* interpoſes; all things, as they were at firſt made out of *nothing*, ſo, with regard to any power of oppoſing his government, they ſtill continue *as nothing*.

Heb. i. 2. Col. i. 17.

ch. xl. 17.

But this Perfection of the divine Power in *Ruling over all*, as it appears *demonſtrably* to *conſiderate and inquiſitive perſons*, in that general *Providence* which preſides over and directs the *whole Courſe of Nature*; ſo to the *greater part of Mankind*, it manifeſts itſelf *more* conſpicuouſly in thoſe remarkable Events, which we uſually ſtile particular *Providences*: Which, when they are directly *miraculous* interpoſitions, are apt indeed moſt ſtrongly to affect men; but, *without* That, are ſufficient Evidences of the Supreme Power by which the World is governed. Inſtances of this kind, are, the *Flood* wherewith God deſtroyed the old World; The bringing the *Jews* out of *Egypt*, with a mighty hand and with a ſtretched out arm; The judgment upon *Nebuchadnezzar*, that great King of *Babylon*, (*Dan.* iv.) who while he was vaunting himſelf in the pride of his heart, and ſaying to himſelf, *Is not This great Babylon which I have built?* ſuddenly he was ſtruck with ſuch a diſtemper from Heaven, that his Underſtanding was taken from him, and he ſeemed *to himſelf* to be driven from among men, and to eat graſs with the Beaſts of the field, till the Pride of his Heart was humbled, and his reaſon returned unto him, and he gave glory to the God of Heaven. And, to mention no more Inſtances; of This kind was the deſtruction of *Sennacherib*, 2 Kings xix. 35. *when an Angel ſmote in one night in the camp of the Aſſyrians an hundred fourſcore and five thouſand men.* Theſe Princes called themſelves *Supreme*, and looked upon themſelves as *Lords of the World*, and behaved themſelves accordingly, as having no ſuperiour; not conſidering, in the midſt of their Power and Glory, that *he that is Higher than the Higheſt regarded*, and that *there were Higher than They*, Eccleſ. v. 8. The *greateſt* mortal power, (of men *whoſe Breath is in their noſtrils*, that is, whoſe Life depends upon ſo ſmall a circumſtance as a Breath of Air,) being *nothing* in compariſon to the power of the *meaneſt* miniſtring Spirit in the Armies of the Angels of God; who (as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it) *refraineth the Spirit of Princes, and is wonderful among the Kings of the Earth.* This is the *Firſt* particular, wherein the Perfection of the divine Power conſiſts; its *giving* Being *originally* to *all* things, and ruling *them abſolutely* while they *continue* in Being.

2*dly*, The *ſecond* particular, wherein the perfection of the divine Power conſiſts, is this; that it not only extends to the doing all *things* in the government of the whole Univerſe, and That without any the leaſt oppoſition from the *things themſelves*;

themſelves; but that it does them alſo without any *difficulty* in *itſelf*; without *any* pains, or labour of operation; with ſuch abſolute and perfect *eaſe*, as not only not *Men*, but probably *no finite Beings whatſoever*, do even *thoſe* things, which are the moſt *eaſily* done by them. This Notion is ſublimely expreſt by *Iſaiah*, ch. xl. 28. *Haſt thou not known, haſt thou not heard, that the everlaſting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the Earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?* There was a certain Sect among the antient Philoſophers, who, pretending they durſt not think God ſhould take upon him the *Trouble* of governing the World; covered their Atheiſm by aſſerting, that to the *Happineſs* of God it was neceſſary to ſuppoſe him unconcerned *for*, and removed at an infinite diſtance *from* the World. But this Exemption of the infinitely bleſſed God, from ſo mean an imperfection as *Care and Solicitude*; which the *Epicureans* provided for, by making him *abſent* from the World; does on the contrary *really* ariſe, from his being *preſent*, actually *Omnipreſent*, to *every* part of the Univerſe; ſo as to be able to direct and govern the *Whole* with *leſs* difficulty to himſelf, (if *That* may with any propriety be ſo called, which indeed is *no* difficulty *at all*;) he governs, I ſay, and directs the whole World with *leſs* difficulty, than any finite creature can ſo much as *behold* or *view* any part of it. *He ſitteth upon the circle of the Earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as graſhoppers; he ſtretcheth out the Heavens as a Curtain; and ſpreadeth them out as a Tent to dwell in*, Iſ. xl. 22.

3dly, The *third and laſt* particular, wherein the perfection of the divine Power conſiſts, is, its doing not only *all* things, and doing them *without difficulty*, but its doing them alſo perfectly *at once*, without ſtanding in need of any *Time* to do them in. The original ſubſtances of all things, were probably created *in a moment: In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*, Gen. i. 1. And though the conſequent formation of This Earth out of a Chaos, is indeed repreſented to *us* as having been performed gradually in certain *periods of time*; yet the reaſon of this, is not that the *Power of God* required any ſuch *number of days* (with regard to *itſelf*) to accompliſh this work in; but only to repreſent more diſtinctly to *our* conception, the harmony and beauty of the ſeveral parts of this wonderful Fabrick of the World; which the divine Power could as eaſily have ſet in order in *one ſingle moment*, as in *ſix days* or *years*. The Notion of *This* Perfection of the divine Power, in doing things thus *inſtantly*, or *in a moment*, is ſet forth in Scripture by God's cauſing things to be produced, as it were without any operation at all, by his mere Will or Command. *God who* commanded *the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. ſaying, Let there be *Light, and there was Light*, Gen. i. 3. And Pſ. xxxiii. 6, 9, *By the* word *of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the hoſt of them by the* Breath of his Mouth; *He* ſpake *the word, and it was done*; *he* commanded, *and it ſtood faſt*. The meaning of all which expreſſions is not to be taken literally, as if liteleſs Matter were capable of obeying any *Law*; much leſs that That which had no Being, could by obeying a *command*, come into Being: But the meaning is, that the *Actions of God* are as ſwift as *Thought*; and the *Effects* of his *operations* as *immediate*, as if *Willing and Acting* were *really* in *Him* (what they are figuratively repreſented to *Us*,) *one and the ſame Thing*. And This alſo is the true meaning, if there be any meaning at all, of what the School-Authors ſay, when they affirm that God is a *mere* or *ſimple* Act: Not that the *Action itſelf* is the *Perſon who acts*, (which is very unintelligible and very abſurd;) But that the *Actions of God* are ſo inſtantaneous and perfect, that to *Us* they are ſcarce diſtinguiſhable from his *Will* or *Mind itſelf*. Having thus briefly endeavoured to give ſome faint hints and repreſentations, ſome little inadequate Idea, *wherein* the peculiar Perfection of this divine Power *conſiſts*, and *in what inſtances* it has principally diſplayed itſelf; I proceed in the

III*d* place, To conſider *what* particulars are *not included* in the true Notion of *Omnipotence itſelf*. And

1*ſt*, 'Tis evident *Infinite Power* muſt be underſtood to reach to all *poſſible* things, but cannot be ſaid to extend to the working any thing which implies a *Contradiction*: As, that a Thing ſhould *be* and *not be* at the ſame time; that the ſame thing ſhould *be made*, and *not be made*; or *have been*, and *not have been*: That the ſame Body ſhould be in *two places at once*, or *not be in the*

SERM. IX.

place where it is: That things ſhould be *equal* and *not equal* at the ſame time; or the ſame thing *greater* or *leſs* than *itſelf*. Theſe and the like, are, in the Nature of Things, abſolutely impoſſible; and to aſcribe to God a Power of doing what can't be done, is not *magnifying*, but *mocking* his Power. And the Reaſon is plain: Becauſe a Power of cauſing a thing to *be*, at the ſame time that it *is not*, is only a Power of doing that which is Nothing, that is, no Power at all.

2*dly*, The *Infinite* Power of God, cannot be ſaid to extend to ſuch things, as are naturally *evil* abſolutely with reſpect to *himſelf*; that is to ſay, which imply *natural imperfection* in the Being *itſelf*, to whom ſuch Power is aſcribed. Such would be, a Power of *deſtroying his own Being, weakning or diminiſhing his own Power*, or *limiting it* any otherwiſe than by the free determinations of Wiſdom and Goodneſs. For, any *capacity*, or *poſſibility* of being *diminiſhed*, even tho' by the unlimited Power *itſelf working upon itſelf*, would be *Imperfection or Weakneſs*, and not *Power*.

3*dly*, Infinite Power, *cannot* be underſtood to include a poſſibility of doing ſuch things as are morally *evil*, with regard to *Others*. Such are whatever things are *unjuſt*, *unrighteous*, *cruel*, *contrary to Promiſe*, and the like. A poſſibility of doing any of which things, is (as before) a Mark, not of *Power*, but of *Impotency or Weakneſs*. Hence the Scripture frequently uſes ſuch expreſſions as theſe; *God which* cannot *lye*, Tit. i. 2; *he* cannot *deny himſelf*, 2 Tim. ii. 13. And *Heb.* vi. 13, 18, *Becauſe God could ſwear by no greater, he ſware by himſelf,* ----- *confirming the immutability of his counſel by an Oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was* impoſſible *for God to lye, we might have a ſtrong conſolation.* The *Ground* indeed or *Reaſon* of the impoſſibility of God's doing any of theſe things, is not the ſame as the impoſſibility of working contradictions. For *contradictions* are impoſſible *abſolutely*, in the nature of the *things themſelves*; but *doing evil* is impoſſible *relatively* only, with reſpect to the *Nature* of a perfectly *good Being*. But tho' the *ground* or *reaſon* of the impoſſibility is different, yet the *impoſſibility itſelf* is *in Event* the *ſame*. For God can no more act in contradiction to the *moral perfections* of his *own* Nature, than he can act in contradiction to the *abſolute Nature* of *Things:* Nor is it any more poſſible, that a Being of infinite *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs*, and *Truth*, ſhould do any thing *unjuſtly*, *unrighteouſly*, *or falſely*; than that a Thing ſhould *be* and *not be* at the ſame time. The *Rectitude* of his *Will*, is as unalterable, as the *Neceſſity* of his *Nature*: and 'tis as truly a contradiction, that the *Will* of an infinitely *Good* Being, ſhould *chuſe* to do any thing contrary to *Right*; as that the *Power* of an infinitely *powerful* Being, ſhould be *able* to do any thing inconſiſtent with *Power*. For in like manner as 'tis *for this Reaſon* manifeſt, that infinite Power cannot extend to *natural* contradictions, *becauſe* they imply a deſtruction of *that very Power*, by which they muſt be ſuppoſed to be worked; ſo 'tis alſo *for the like reaſon* evident, that the ſame infinite Power cannot extend to *moral* contradictions, *becauſe* Theſe imply a deſtruction of ſome *other* Attributes, as neceſſarily belonging to the divine Nature as Power.

IV. Thus have I endeavoured briefly, 1*ſt*, to prove, that God *muſt* of neceſſity *be* all-powerful; 2*dly*, to give ſome general and inadequate idea, *wherein* the Perfection of this Power *conſiſts*; and 3*dly*, to ſhow what *particulars* are *not included* in the true Notion even of *Omnipotence itſelf*. What remains, is, to draw ſome uſeful *Inferences* from the ſeveral parts of the foregoing Diſcourſe. And theſe inferences will be of two ſorts; 1*ſt*, ſuch as may aſſiſt us to make a right judgment of the Truth or Falſhood of ſeveral *Doctrines* which have been taught in Divinity; And 2*dly*, ſuch as may tend more immediately to direct and influence our *Practice*. But the conſideration of Theſe, muſt be referred to a following opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Of the OMNIPOTENCE of GOD.

PSAL. cxlvii. 5.

Great is our Lord, and Great is his Power.

SERM. X.

IN a former diſcourſe upon theſe words, I propoſed *1ſt*, to endeavour to ſhow, that God *muſt* of neceſſity *be* All-powerful: *2dly*, to give ſome faint hints and repreſentations, ſome general and inadequate idea, *wherein* the *Perfection* of this Power conſiſts, and *in what inſtances* it has principally diſplayed itſelf: *3dly*, to conſider *what* particulars are *not included*, in the true Notion even of *Omnipotence* itſelf. And *4thly*, to draw ſome practical *Inferences* from the whole. The *Three firſt* of theſe general Heads, I have already gone through. That God *muſt* of neceſſity *be* All-powerful, I have ſhown from *this* conſideration, that the Powers of all things that Are, are derived from *Him*, and depend continually upon him. The peculiar *Perfection* wherein this divine Power conſiſts, and the *Inſtances* wherein it has principally diſplayed itſelf, I have ſhown to *be*; its *giving Being* originally to *all* things, and its *governing* them continually while they are in being; its doing all things with abſolute and perfect *Eaſe*, without any *difficulty* in *itſelf*, or *oppoſition* from any *other* thing; and its doing things perfectly *at once*; without ſtanding in need of any *Time* to do them in. *Laſtly*, the particulars *not included* in the true Notion even of *Omnipotence itſelf*, I have ſhown, *are*, whatever things are *Contradictory* abſolutely in their *own Nature*; whatever things are *naturally evil*, and imply *weakneſs or imperfection* in the *Being itſelf* to whom the Power of doing them is aſcribed; and whatever things are *morally evil* and imply *injuſtice or unrighteouſneſs* towards *Others*: The

Power

SERM. X.

Power of doing *these* things is not included even in *Omnipotence itself*; and the aſcribing to *God* any ſuch poſſibility, would not be a *magnifying* but *mocking* his Power.

IV. That which remains at this Time, is to draw ſome uſeful and proper *Inferences*, from the conſideration of this *whole* Doctrine of the *divine Omnipotence*. And theſe Inferences may be of *two* ſorts. *Firſt*, ſuch as will aſſiſt us to make a right judgment of the Truth or Falſhood of ſeveral *Doctrines* which have ſometimes been taught in Divinity: and *Secondly*, ſuch as may tend more immediately to direct and influence our *Practice*.

I. Thoſe Inferences from the Notion of the divine Omnipotence, which may aſſiſt us in making a right judgment of the Truth or Falſhood of ſeveral *Doctrines* that have ſometimes been taught in Divinity, are ſuch as follow.

1*ſt*, If the Power of God be abſolutely Supreme and infinite, then 'tis evident that *no Power* can poſſibly be *contrary* to *His*, *no Kingdom oppoſite* to *His*; any farther than He himſelf, in the infinite and unſearchable Wiſdom of his Supreme Government, thinks fit to permit and ſuffer it *ſhould* be ſo. When therefore we read of the *Devil*'s ſetting up a Kingdom in oppoſition to the Kingdom of God; great care muſt be taken that we do not ſo underſtand it, as if the Devil had, properly ſpeaking, *any Power* againſt *God*. But the Meaning is *This* only; that, in like manner as *Wicked Men* ſet up themſelves againſt *God*, and reſiſt his *Will*, and exalt themſelves in oppoſition to *God's Kingdom*; and yet really have *no Power* at all, any further than God thinks fit to permit them: So *the Devil* likewiſe oppoſes the Kingdom and the Will of God, not by any *natural*, but by a *moral* Power only; not by being able to reſiſt the Will of God by *Force*, but by being ſuffered to do things wicked and diſpleaſing to God, through that natural *liberty of chuſing and acting*, which is eſſential to the Being of a rational Creature. One of the greateſt and nobleſt Effects of God's *creating power*, is his producing rational Creatures, ſuch as are Angels and Men. Without Theſe, all the reſt of the whole Creation had loſt its beauty, becauſe *Theſe only* are capable of diſcerning what That Beauty is, and of praiſing their Creator for it. Yet in order to make them capable of returning him this Praiſe and Adoration worthily, by delighting to obey his Commands and imitate his Nature; it was eſſentially neceſſary they ſhould be indued with that Liberty or Freedom of Will, which at the ſame time that it made them capable of Virtue, could not but make them likewiſe capable of Vice. Such of them therefore, as abuſed that Liberty of Will to the Choice of *Wickedneſs*, (which God gave them on the contrary to make them capable of *Virtue*;) became thereby Enemies to *God*, and Deceivers one of *another*. And the oppoſition they make to God by the Practice of Wickedneſs, is no other, than what originally by the Freedom of an intellectual nature it was neceſſary they ſhould be capable of making; and for the preventing of which, it is not proper that the abſolute Power of God ſhould interpoſe, before the final day of Retribution. For the Kingdom of God, which wicked men and wicked Spirits ſet themſelves in oppoſition to, is not the Kingdom of his *Power*, but his Kingdom of *Righteouſneſs*; and the very nature and eſſence of a Kingdom of *Righteouſneſs*, is, to prevail, not by *Force*, but by the Victory of *Virtue* over the oppoſition and the Deceits of Wickedneſs. This obſervation may be of conſiderable Uſe, both for the right apprehending the nature of God's Supreme Government, and for the true underſtanding of ſeveral parts of Scripture. When we read of the Devil's firſt rebelling againſt the Almighty, and exalting his throne above the Stars of God, and preſuming to be like the moſt High; for which offence he was caſt down from Heaven; 'tis evident the meaning is not; (as ſome have childiſhly ſuppoſed, or poetically repreſented,) that he rebelled againſt God, as hoping to prevail by *Force*. No; Thoſe Angelick Spirits, had their Knowledge been *but equal* to *ours*, as indeed it was *far ſuperiour*; but had it been *equal only* to that of *Men*, yet they could not poſſibly have been ſo abſurdly ignorant, as to imagine that Finite could prevail *by Force* againſt Infinite, or not know that the Almighty could, if he pleaſed, annihilate them as ſwift as Thought, and withdraw their very Being from them in a moment, and deſtroy them for ever with the leaſt blaſt of his mouth. *Force* therefore, 'tis evident, they could not think of; But the meaning of the Devil's rebelling, is; that he preſumptuouſly tranſgreſſed the Law of the moſt

moſt High; and preferred his own Will, as wicked *Men* alſo do, before the Commandments of God; and probably firſt deceived *himſelf* with the very ſame Temptation, wherewith he afterwards deceived our Firſt Parent; *In the day thou doſt this Thing, ſurely thou ſhalt not die.* We read indeed, *Rev.* xii. 7, that *there was War in Heaven; Michael and his Angels fought againſt the dragon, and the dragon fought and his Angels; And prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in Heaven; And the great dragon was caſt out, that old Serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; and his Angels were caſt out with him.* But the meaning of this paſſage is not literal, as if the Devil had Power to *fight againſt* the Angels or Miniſters of God's government; But according to the ſublimity and loftineſs of the prophetick ſtyle, 'tis evident it muſt be underſtood as a highly figurative deſcription, how wonderfully the *Goſpel of Chriſt* prevailed in the primitive times, by the courage and conſtancy of the Martyrs, againſt *Heathen Idolatry* then poſſeſſed of the Powers of the whole Earth. For ſo the careful and attentive Reader may clearly ſee it explained in the very next words, ver. 10. *Now is come ſalvation and ſtrength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Chriſt; For the Accuſer of our Brethren is caſt down; — And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their Teſtimony; and they loved not their lives unto the Death.* 'Tis therefore a great Error in *good men*, to magnify the Power of the Devil, (as has ſometimes been done) to ſuch a degree, as to become either an *Objection* againſt the Truth of Religion, or too great a *Diſcouragement* in the practice of it: Whereas on the contrary our Saviour declares to his Diſciples, St. *Luke* x. 18. *I beheld Satan as Lightning fall from Heaven; Behold, I give unto you Power over all the Power of the Enemy, and nothing ſhall by any means hurt you*: And St. *Jude* aſſures us, ver. 6. that *the Angels which kept not their firſt eſtate, but left their own habitation, he hath reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day:* And St. *Paul* hath taught us, 1 *Cor.* x. 13, that *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above That we are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it:* And St. *James* accordingly exhorts, ch. iv. 7. *Reſiſt the Devil, and he will flee from you.* The apprehenſion therefore that many melancholy *pious* perſons have ſometimes entertained, of the great Power of the Devil, is very erroneous and groundleſs. But 'tis a much greater Fault in *bad* men, to magnify the Devil's power, as they are very apt to do, in order to *excuſe* their *own* Crimes: As if, becauſe the *Devil tempted* them to do ill Things, therefore the *doing* thoſe ill things was a leſs fault in *themſelves*. Which is an Error ariſing from a very falſe Notion of the Devil's temptations. For had the Devil any Power at all over mens Wills or Actions, it would indeed be, if not an Excuſe for their Wickedneſs, yet at leaſt an extenuation of it in the Sight both of God and Man, to be able to alledge they were influenced by ſome ſuperiour Power. But if the Devil's power of tempting men, be nothing more, but like that of wicked *mens* tempting one another; *viz.* the ſetting before them *opportunities* of doing evil, and repreſenting to them the unrighteous *pleaſure or profit* they may be maſters of thereby; 'tis evident this is no excuſe for a man to alledge in his own behalf, that he *did* a wicked action, becauſe a fair *opportunity* of doing it was laid before him, or becauſe he ſaw it would bring him ſome *pleaſure or profit*. And yet This is plainly all the Power the Devil generally has over Men. *Let no man ſay* (ſays St. *James*) *when he is tempted, I am tempted of God*; that is, let no man think that God permits the Devil to have properly any Power or Influence over him; For *every man* (ſaith he) *is* then only *tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt and enticed*, Jam. i. 13. The Devil *did* indeed enter into *Judas*, when he reſolved to betray our Saviour; but 'twas the Covetouſneſs of his *own Heart* only, that gave him admiſſion. And St. *Paul* tells us of perſons in *the ſnare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his Will*; but 'tis becauſe they are ſlaves by their own conſent, to thoſe *Habits* of Wickedneſs which are the ſnares of the Devil. And 'twas *Satan* filled *Ananias*'s heart to lye to the Holy Ghoſt; yet this in Scripture is ſo far from being eſteemed an *Excuſe*, that on the contrary the A-

SERM. X.

poſtle urges it as as an *aggravation* of his Crime; *Why* has Satan filled thine Heart? *why* have you been ſo wicked, as to commit ſo abominable a Crime, which you *knew* could be nothing but a ſuggeſtion of the Devil?

What has been ſaid upon This Head, will hold yet *more* ſtrongly againſt that ſtill *more* abſurd and wicked opinion, taught by ſome Antient Corrupters of Religion in the primitive Times, called by the name of *Manichees:* Who from the Many Evils and Wickedneſſes which are in the World, concluded there was a *Supreme Evil Principle*, originally oppoſite unto, and independent upon, the Power of God. Which blaſphemous opinion, was firſt taught by the *Perſian* Philoſophers, who called the Good Principle *Light*, and the Evil Principle *Darkneſs*. And againſt This abſurd opinion it is, that *Iſaias* in his Prophecy to *Cyrus* King of *Perſia*, (*Iſ.* xlv. 6. 7.) thus declares; *I am the Lord, and there is none elſe; I form the Light, and create Darkneſs; I make Peace, and create Evil; I the Lord, do all theſe things;* That is, Thoſe Powers, which the *Perſians* looked upon as original Supreme Principles of Good and Evil, calling them by the figurative Name of *Light and Darkneſs*, are nothing but the Creatures of God, acting always either by *His* appointment, or at leaſt by his Permiſſion; and there is *No Power* independent upon *His*. If it be here asked: ſince God is the Supreme Infinite Good, and there is *No Power* independent upon *His*; why then are not *all* things made good? for, *who hath reſiſted his Will?* the Anſwer has already been given *in part*; that Freedom of Will, is eſſential to the Being of rational Creatures; So that Abſolute Power over-ruling that Freedom, would be deſtroying that Nature which it had created; And therefore that poſſibility of Evil, which is conſequent upon Freedom, is reaſonable to be permitted. And This holds, both with regard to Evil *Spirits* and Evil *Men*. But then, with regard to *Men*, it may ſtill *further be anſwered*; that, beſides its being inconſiſtent with moral government to over-rule their Wills by Power, there ariſes moreover from thoſe Evils, which could not reaſonably be prevented, a various manifeſtation of the *Wiſdom of God* in bringing Good frequently out of Evil; of the *Mercy and Goodneſs and Compaſſion of God* in bearing with Sinners unto Repentance; and finally of the *Juſtice of God* in deſtroying thoſe who will by no means be amended. And This is the Anſwer St. *Paul* gives to a like difficulty, *Rom.* ix. 22. *What if God, willing to ſhow his Wrath, and to make his Power known, indured with much long-ſuffering the Veſſels of Wrath fitted to deſtruction? fitted to deſtruction*, by their *own* Wickedneſs; yet, at the ſame time, indured on *God's* part *with much long-ſuffering*, that they might have ſpace of Repentance.

Zoroaſtres, &c.

2*dly*, From what was ſaid concerning the *Extent* of the divine Power, that it muſt by no means be underſtood as including a Poſſibility of working *Contradictions*; the *Inference* naturally to be drawn, is, that we ought to lay it down as a *Rule*, always to reject with indignation, thoſe who would impoſe upon our Faith any plain Impoſſibilities, under colour and pretence of the *Omnipotence of God*. For if Contradictions really deſtroy themſelves, and are Nothing; and a Power of working them is but a Power of doing nothing; and conſequently the aſcribing to God any ſuch Power, is not magnifying, but mocking his Omnipotence; it follows plainly, that whoſoever endeavours to impoſe any ſuch thing on mens Faith, howſoever in words he may pretend to exalt and think highly of the divine Power, yet in reality he does but reproach the *Reaſon* of Mankind, and turn *Religion* into Ridicule. For if the Religion a man teaches be confeſſedly *unreaſonable*; with what Arguments can he apply ſeriouſly to Another man's Reaſon to believe and embrace it? And if it be repugnant to the *Attributes* of God; what *Authority* can be able to ſupport it? The *Effect* of ſuch Doctrines is nothing elſe but expoſing our ſelves to the Scorn of Unbelievers; and giving too juſt occaſion to Atheiſtical and profane Spirits to blaſpheme the Sacred Names of God and Religion. Of this nature is the doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; that great Reproach of the Common Senſe of *Men*; and great Profanation of that divine Attribute, the Omnipotence of *God*. And of the ſame Nature and Tendency in proportion, are all falſe and fooliſh Explications of the plain and true doctrines of Religion: Such explications, as are frequently to be found in ſubtle and ſcholaſtick Writers, and ſometimes in Others from whom ſuch things ſhould not be expected; which make religion unintelligible,

ligible, and consequently not really and heartily believed, even by those who Themselves fancy that they do believe it. For nothing influences mens *practice*, but what they understand: And whatever religion has no effectual influence upon the constant course of men's Lives and Actions, to establish Virtue, Righteousness and Charity in their whole behaviour; is a Religion for which men are certainly nothing the better, and may very possibly be much the worse. SERM. X.

3*dly*, If the Power of doing *Evil* be not included in the true Notion of Omnipotence; then from hence we may learn not to regard such Doctrines as under pretence of God's Sovereignty, supreme uncontroulable dominion, and absolute Power, assert *hard* things concerning him, *inconsistent* with his moral Perfections. Of This kind, are all those Doctrines, which make *God* the Author of *Sin and Death:* The Doctrines of absolute *Predestination* and *unconditionate Decrees*; the Doctrines which subject *Men* to unavoidable *Fatality*, and represent *God* capable of the greatest *Cruelty*. These Doctrines must of necessity be false. And the Scriptures upon which they are built, though to the careful Reader they have plainly enough another meaning, yet even if we could not tell how to interpret them otherwise, we might nevertheless be certain that their sense was mistaken; because we are beforehand sure from the nature of God, that 'tis altogether as impossible for him to do what is *Evil* or *Unjust*, as to be able to work even *Contradictions themselves*. The Authors of the contrary Opinion alledge, that whatever God does, is *therefore Just and Good*, because *He* does it. Which is indeed very true: But not, unless it be rightly understood. For the meaning of that Assertion, is not, that the nature of Things would be altered by God's acting otherwise than he does; or that What is Evil and Unjust would become Just and Good by supposing God to do it; but the right meaning of it is, that because from our Knowledge of the divine Attributes we are beforehand Sure *in general* that God *will* do nothing but what is *in it self* Just and Good, therefore whenever we know of any thing *in particular* that *God does* it, we may safely from thence and for that reason depend upon it, that the Thing is *in its own Nature* Just and Good; for that, otherwise, *He* would not have done it. But now if men hence take occasion to contend, that things in their *own Nature* hard and unrighteous, may, by being ascribed to *God*, be taught and defended; what is this, but abusing mens Reason with a pretence of God's absolute Power and Dominion? As if, because what a known *just man* or *just governour* at any time *does*, may well be depended upon to be in it self a *just Thing*; therefore, tho' such a Person should *change* his character, and do a thing plainly *unjust*, it might still be imagined to follow that it was *justly* and *rightly* done. Is not this plainly *speaking deceitfully for God*; and having recourse to his Supremacy and Omnipotence to destroy all the other Perfections of the divine Nature? The Foundation of all erroneous opinions in these Matters, is the Notion of *Dominion*'s being founded in *Power*, and that *Omnipotence only* is the Ground of God's *absolute Right* over his *Creatures*. But the Falsity of this Notion appears from hence, that if *Power* was the Measure of *Right*, it would follow that all the other Perfections of God were of no moment; and that, whatever the worst Being in the World did, provided he had but absolute Power, would be as just and righteous as the Actions of the All-merciful and Good God: Which is manifest Blasphemy. The Truth therefore is evidently This: In things merely *positive*, which in their own nature are neither good nor evil, *Dominion or Power* is indeed the Foundation of *Right*; and *Superiour Authority* is the only *Measure*, by which the *Fitness or Goodness* of such things is to be judged of. But matters of *Moral* consideration, derive their Goodness or Badness, not from *Will or Power*, but from the unchangeable *nature of Things themselves*, from that eternal Reason, the unalterable conformity to which, is one of the principal internal Perfections of the divine Nature; And therefore in *these* things, the *Power of God* ought no more to be conceived capable of making *Evil Good*, than in *natural* things it can be imagined to produce *Contradictions*. If This were not the case, any sort of Wickedness might come to be taught under pretence of Religion.

But II. There is *another* Sort of Inference to be drawn from the consideration of the Divine Omnipotence; which may still more immediately influence and direct our *Practice*. And

1*st*,

SERM. X.

1*ſt*, If God has infinite and irreſiſtible *Power*, hence ariſes an evident neceſſity of fearing and obeying him. The *Rule* indeed of his Government, is not *Power*; but *Equity*. But as his Commands are always in themſelves *Juſt and Righteous*, ſo his *Power will* exact Obedience to thoſe Commands. *There is one Law-giver*, (ſays the Apoſtle, St. *James* iv. 12.) *who is able to ſave and to deſtroy*.

2*dly*, To *wicked men* therefore, who have lived in diſobedience to the Laws of God, preſumptuouſly and impenitently; the conſideration of the Greatneſs of the Divine *Power*, is *juſt* matter of *Terrour*. Pſ. xc. 11. *Who knoweth the Power of thine Anger*? And the Apoſtle, Heb. x. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God:* And our Saviour himſelf, St. *Luke* xii. 5. *I will forewarn you whom ye ſhall fear; Fear Him, who, after he hath killed, hath Power to caſt into Hell, yea, I ſay unto you, Fear Him.* The moſt enormous Offenders *may* poſſibly eſcape the Puniſhment of Men, and evade the ſtroke of human Juſtice; They may perhaps conceal their Crimes from the Eye of the World; or by Number, or Strength be too great to be puniſhed by any temporal Authority. But from the *Power* of *God* there is no eſcaping; from *His Juſtice*, there is no appeal; from *His Wrath*, no Strength, no Fraud, no Policy, no Wiſdom or Artifice can deliver them. This therefore is a very ſtrong Argument to perſwade wicked men to Repentance, that they may appeaſe His *Wrath*, whoſe *Power* they cannot reſiſt; and become Objects of his *Mercy*, from whoſe *Juſtice* otherwiſe there is no eſcaping.

3*dly*, The conſideration of the Greatneſs of the Divine Power, is a ſure ground of *Truſt and Confidence* to virtuous and *good men*, at all times and under all diſtreſſes. *Pſ.* lxii. 8. *O put your truſt in God always, ye people; pour out your Hearts before him, for he is our hope:*—— *God ſpake once, and twice I have alſo heard the ſame, that* Power *belongeth unto God.* And *Pſ.* xci. 1, *He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty;*—— *Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſom peſtilence;*—— *Thou ſhalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by day; For the peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs, nor for the deſtruction that waſteth at noon-day.* This is alſo excellently expreſſed in the book of *Job*, ch. v. 12, *He ſhall deliver thee in ſix troubles, yea in ſeven there ſhall no evil touch thee; In famine he ſhall redeem thee from Death, and in War from the Power of the Sword:*—— *At deſtruction and famine thou ſhalt laugh, neither ſhalt thou be afraid of the Beaſts of the Earth; For thou ſhalt be in league with the ſtones of the field, and the Beaſts of the field ſhall be at peace with thee.* And by the Prophet *Habukkuk*, ch. iii. 17, *Tho' the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the Vines; tho' the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; tho' the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; yet will I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* All the afflictions and calamities of *This World* may poſſibly in the courſe of things, fall upon the *beſt* of Men; but he that *made the World* is their defence and deliverance. *Oppreſſors and Tyrants* may hate and perſecute them for a time; but *mortal men*, whoſe Breath is in their noſtrils, wherein are they to be accounted of? For God breaketh the Arms of the Mighty, and bringeth the Counſel of the Wicked to nought. The *Devil* may aſſault them with variety of Temptations, and ſtir up againſt them all the Enemies of God and Virtue: But God is infinitely ſuperiour to all the Powers of Wickedneſs, and has reſerved thoſe Apoſtate Spirits in chains under Darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great Day. Such Perſons, ſaith our Saviour, *ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall Any pluck them out of* my *hand*; For *my Father which gave them me, is greater than all*, Joh. x. 28. And St. *Paul*, 2 Tim. i. 12, *I know*, ſays he, *whom I have believed, and I am perſwaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, againſt That day.* This is That Faith and Truſt in God, for which the Patriarch *Abraham* is ſo juſtly commended, *Rom.* iv. 17. *Who*, relying on *God who quickneth the dead, and calleth thoſe things which be not as though they were; Againſt Hope, believed in Hope; and*——*ſtaggered not at the Promiſe of God thro' Unbelief; but was ſtrong in Faith, giving Glory to God; and being fully perſwaded, that What he had promiſed,*

he

he was Able alſo to perform. And *Heb.* xi. 8, 10, 17, 19, *By Faith Abraham when he was called,* —— *went out, not knowing whither he went; and ſojourned in the land of Promiſe as in a ſtrange country;* —*for he looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.* —— *By Faith, when he was tried,*——*he offered up his only begotten Son;* —— *accounting that God was able to raiſe him up even from the dead, from whence alſo he had received him in a figure;* (He had before *received him from the dead in a figure;* that is the *Birth* of his Son in his old age, when his own body was *now* already *as good as dead,* was even as great a Miracle as That which he afterwards expected, of his being *raiſed again.*) This alſo is That Faith of *Moſes,* ver. 24, by which, *when he was come to years, he refuſed to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter; chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of Sin for a ſeaſon; Eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures in Egypt; for he had reſpect unto the recompence of reward,*—*and endured as ſeeing Him who is inviſible.* SERM. X. Heb. xi. 19. and Rom. iv. 19.

4*thly* and *Laſtly;* The conſideration of the Omnipotence of God ought to teach vain Mortals *Humility,* and that the *Potſherds of the Earth* (as the *Prophet* elegantly ſtiles men) ſhould not proudly inſult and domineer over each other. *Pride was not made for Man, nor furious Anger for them that are born of a Woman,* Eccluſ. x. 18. Whatever power any man has, he received it from God; and God, who gave That Power, is infinitely Higher than All; Nay, the meaneſt miniſtring Spirit in the Armies of the Angels of God, is far ſuperiour to all the Power of all the Potentates of the Earth together. Yet even *God himſelf* uſes not arbitrary and abſolute Power to Evil; nor does wrong, even to the meaneſt of his creatures. *Be wiſe now therefore, O ye Kings,* Pſ. ii. 10, *be inſtructed, ye that are Judges of the Earth.* For 'tis the greateſt Glory of the greateſt Men, to imitate in This Particular the Great King and Sovereign of the Univerſe.

SERMON XI.

Of the OMNISCIENCE of GOD.

JOB xxxvii. 16. last part.

Of Him that is perfect in Knowledge.

SERM. XI.

THESE words are a Declaration of That Divine Attribute, the Perfection of *Knowledge*. In discourſing upon which Subject, I ſhall *1ſt* endeavour to prove plainly and intelligibly, that God who is the Governor and Judge of all, *muſt* be a Being indued with *perfect Knowledge*. *2dly*, I ſhall offer ſome Obſervations concerning the *particular Nature and Circumſtances* of the divine Knowledge. And *3dly*, I ſhall make ſome *practical Reflections* upon the whole.

I. In order to prove plainly and intelligibly, that God is a Being which muſt *of Neceſſity* be indued with *perfect Knowledge*; 'tis to be obſerved, that *Knowledge* is a Perfection, without which the foregoing Attributes are no Perfections at all, and without which *thoſe which follow* can have no Foundation. Where there is no *Knowledge*, Eternity and Immenſity are as nothing; and Juſtice, Goodneſs, Mercy, and Wiſdom can have no place. The Idea of *Eternity and Omnipreſence* devoid of *Knowledge*, is as the Notion of *Darkneſs* compared with That of *Light*; 'tis as a Notion of the *World*, without the Sun to illuminate it; 'tis as the Notion of *inanimate Matter*, (which is the Atheiſt's ſupreme Cauſe,) compared with That of *Life and Spirit*. And as for the *following* Attributes, *Juſtice, Goodneſs, Mercy, and Wiſdom*; 'tis evident that, without *Knowledge*, there could not *poſſibly* be any ſuch thing as Theſe *at all*.

Again: That God *muſt* be himſelf a Being indued with *perfect Knowledge*, appears from his having to *other* Beings communicated certain degrees of that Perfection. For whatever Perfection is in any *Effect*, muſt of Neceſſity have been *much more*, in the *Cauſe* that produced it. Nothing can give to *Another*, that which

which it hath not *itſelf*: And therefore from the Figure and Motion, from the Compoſitions and Diviſions of lifeleſs Matter, 'tis evident nothing could ever have ariſen, *but* lifeleſs Matter. Wherefore ſince in Created Beings there *are* many degrees of *Knowledge*, it follows neceſſarily that the *Perfection of Knowledge* muſt be in Him that created them: *Pſ.* xciv. 8, *Ye Fools, when will ye be wiſe? He that planted the Ear, ſhall He not hear? He that formed the Eye, ſhall* He *not ſee? ——he that teaches man Knowledge, ſhall not* He *know?* In the caſe of *Imperfections* indeed, the Argument lies *otherwiſe*: Theſe *may be* in the Effect, tho' they were *not* in the Cauſe: And the reaſon is evident; Becauſe tho' nothing can give what it has not, yet any cauſe may forbear to give *all* that it has; Tho' nothing can communicate *more* than it has itſelf; yet it may communicate as much *leſs*, as it pleaſes. Finiteneſs therefore, which is but a Negation; and all the conſequences of being Finite, ſuch as Figure, Motion, Compoſition, Diviſion and the like, *may* be in the Creature, tho' they are not in the Creator. But whatſoever is a real poſitive Perfection, as *Knowledge* is; *muſt* have been firſt and perfect in the original Cauſe, or elſe it could never have been tranſmitted to any thing that was produced.

Laſtly, to conclude this Firſt Head, as needing not much inlargement; From the *Immenſity* or *Omnipreſence* of God, may the ſame Truth be likewiſe clearly evinced: For from thence it follows, if he is an Intelligent Being at all, (as has already been proved by the foregoing Arguments;) it follows, I ſay, from his *Omnipreſence*, that his *Knowledge muſt be* Infinite and Perfect. For where-ever *Himſelf* is, his *Knowledge* is, which is, inſeparable from his Being, and muſt therefore be *infinite*; And where-ever his infinite *Knowledge* is, 'tis plain it muſt neceſſarily have a thorough proſpect of the inmoſt nature and eſſence of every thing; ſo that nothing can be concealed from his Inſpection.

Having thus briefly proved, that God muſt of Neceſſity be a Being indued with *perfect Knowledge*; I proceed now in the

II*d* place, To offer ſome Obſervations concerning the *particular Nature and Circumſtances* of this divine Knowledge. And this I ſhall do diſtinctly, with regard to the *Object*, the *Manner*, and the *Certainty* of this Knowledge.

1*ſt*, With regard to the *Object*: 'Tis a Knowledge of *All* things abſolutely, without exception. *Our* Knowledge and Comprehenſion of things, is ſhort as our Duration, and narrow as our Extent. Our *Senſes* inform us of the Surfaces and external Properties of a *few* things, within the reach of our imperfect Organs. Our *Reaſon* leads us a little further, to the Knowledge of ſome few *more* things than our Senſes take in, and to the Diſcovery of ſome few of the inward and more hidden Properties of the things about us. Our *Imagination and Conjectures* extend a little further yet, to a *greater Number* of Things; but with more Uncertainty, and leſs Diſtinctneſs. *Angels*, according to the greater Activity of their Nature, and higher Perfection of their Faculties, comprehend ſtill *more* things than We; more in number, and with a more clear inſight; yet limited and bounded as ſtrictly within *their* proper Sphere, as *we* within *ours*. But the Knowledge of *God* is abſolutely unlimited, and perfectly univerſal; infinite as his Duration, and boundleſs as his Immenſity; extending to all things every where, without exception; and to all the Properties and Powers of things, without reſtriction.

But, to be more particular: The Knowledge of God, with reſpect to the *Object* of it, is a Knowledge of all the *Actions* of Men; a Knowledge of all their *Thoughts and Intentions*; a Knowledge of what ſeems yet more difficult, even of *future and contingent Events*.

The moſt obvious, the firſt, and moſt manifeſt Object of the divine Knowledge, is, *All the* Actions *of all Men*. *Prov.* v. 21, *The ways of Men are before the Eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*: and *Job* xxxiv. 21, *His eyes are upon the ways of Man, and he ſeeth all his goings*. *We* behold but a *ſmall* part of each other's behaviour; and can obſerve only a *few* of the Actions, even of thoſe with whom we converſe moſt intimately. But God ſees *all* the Actions of every man, and compares and weighs them together; and cannot by *one part* of our behaviour, be led into a falſe judgment concerning any *other* part of it. He underſtands the *Quality and Circumſtances* of every

SERM. XI.

every Action, and exactly obſerves every *degree* of Good or of Evil in it; even degrees as ſecret and imperceptible to *Us*, or which *we* may be apt to fancy of as ſmall importance, as the falling of a ſparrow to the Earth, or a hair of our head falling ſhort in number. And This Exactneſs of Knowledge, is neceſſary to the Judge of all the Earth, in order to his doing that which is right, in the final deciſion of mens eternal ſtate; where every the leaſt variation in the degree of Happineſs or Miſery, cannot but be of the utmoſt importance, becauſe it will be from thenceforth unchangeable and everlaſting. *God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*, Eccleſ. xii. 14. And *Luk.* xii. 2, 3, *There is nothing covered, that ſhall not be revealed; neither hid, that ſhall not be known: Whatſoever ye have ſpoken in darkneſs, ſhall be heard in the light; and that which ye have ſpoken in the ear in cloſets, ſhall be proclaimed upon the houſe-tops.* And 1 *Tim.* v. 24, 25, *Some mens Sins are open beforehand, going before unto judgment; and ſome men, they follow after: Likewiſe alſo the good works of ſome, are manifeſt beforehand; and they that are otherwiſe cannot be hid. They that are otherwiſe, cannot be hid*; That is; Not, as it is generally underſtood, *thoſe works that are otherwiſe than good, cannot be hid*; For That is what was affirmed in the foregoing verſe: But the meaning is; *theſe* good *works, which are not now manifeſt, yet ſhall not always be hid:* For ſo the Apoſtle's ſimilitude, is compleat and elegant: *As* ſome mens *ſins* are open *beforehand*, and others they follow *after*; ſo alſo the *good* works of ſome, are manifeſt beforehand; and *thoſe good* works which are now *otherwiſe*, which are now *not manifeſt*, yet ſhall not *always* be hid. This exactneſs of the divine Knowledge, in order to the final and univerſal judgment, is elegantly deſcribed in Scripture by that figurative expreſſion, of Men's Actions being all *written in a Book:* Pſ. lvi. 8, *Thou telleſt my wandrings*; ------- *Are they not written in thy* Book? Mal. iii. 16, *The Lord hearkned and heard it, and a* Book *of Remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name.* Dan. vii. 10. *The judgment was ſet, and the* Books *were opened.* And *Rev.* xx. 12, *The* Books *were opened,* ---- *and the dead were judged out of thoſe things that were written in the* Books, *according to their works.* The meaning of all theſe places is, that every action of every man, is more certainly known to *God*, and remembred unto judgment; than things are made certain to be remembred among *men*, by being written down in *Books.* And from hence it appears, that mens *names being written in the book of life from the Foundation of the World*, does not ſignify their being predeſtinated by an abſolute decree to eternal Life; but their being recorded before God in all ages from the beginning, as thoſe who are judged worthy of eternal Life. For when a good man turns wicked, God threatens to blot *his Name out of his Book*, Rev. iii. 5. Which could not poſſibly *be*, if it was meant of an abſolute Predeſtination. And on the contrary, *Acts* iii. 19, the Sins of them that repent, are ſaid to be *blotted out*; that is, they ſhall not appear or be remembred againſt them in judgment. And This concerning the *Actions* of Men.

The next, and more wonderful, Object of the divine Knowledge, is, *the Hearts, the Thoughts and Intentions* of Men. *We*, and perhaps all created Beings, can judge of Perſons, *Only* by their words and actions, and *by* the outward appearances in their behaviour: But God, is *a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* 1 Chr. xxviii. 9, *The Lord ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts.* And 1 *Sam.* xvi. 7, *The Lord ſeeth not as Man ſeeth; For Man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the Heart.* Where-ever we are, he is always with us, and ſurrounds us with his boundleſs preſence; he includes and penetrates every part of our Subſtance, ſees into our inmoſt Thoughts and Purpoſes, and ſearches the moſt ſecret receſſes of our Hearts and Souls, with his unerring and all-ſeeing Eye. And *This* alſo is a Power neceſſary, in order to his judging the World with Equity. For Wickedneſs lies in the *Heart*, as well as in the *Actions*; And, *Thou ſhalt not covet*, is a Command, as well as Thou ſhalt not *do* ill. *Whoſoever* looketh *on a woman to luſt after her*, that is, with an ill *intention*, tho' without opportunity of any ſinful *act*; *hath already* (ſaith our Saviour) *committed adultery with*

Heb. iv. 12.

with her in his heart, Matt. v. 28. And ch. xv. 19, *Out of the* Heart, ſaith he, *proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, Falſe-witneſs, Blaſphemies.* In order therefore to the paſſing a righteous judgment concerning men's final ſtate, 'tis neceſſary that the Judge be able to ſearch the Hearts. And both Scripture and Reaſon, and the juſt and unavoidable Fears of ill-deſigning men, do ſufficiently bear teſtimony to the Truth of the doctrine, that God *is* able to do This infallibly and without Error. Nay there are caſes wherein the Heart being deceitful, not only to others, but even to a man's *ſelf* alſo by ſecret partiality and imperceptible prejudices; no perfect and unerring judgment can be made of a man by *any other*, than by God only. 1 *Cor.* iv. 4. *Yea, I judge not mine* own ſelf, ſaith St. *Paul*; *For I know nothing by myſelf*, (*I am not* conſcious *of any thing to myſelf*, ſo the words ought to be rendred;) *yet am I not hereby juſtified; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* And 1 *Joh.* iii. 20, *If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.*

But there is a further, and ſtill *more* wonderful Object of the Divine Knowledge, than even the Hearts or Thoughts of Men; and That is, *Future Events.* He that gave all things thoſe Powers and Faculties which they enjoy, muſt be acknowledged to foreſee what each of thoſe Powers and Faculties will produce; and, thro' an infinite ſeries of Cauſes, perceive at one View all things that ever *ſhall be*, as if they *at preſent were.* Even the moſt contingent Futurities, the actions of free Agents, cannot be conceived to be hidden from *his* foreſight, who gave to his Creatures thoſe very Powers of Will and Choice, by which they are free agents. *Known unto God are all his works, from the Beginning of the World,* Acts xv. 18. The many predictions of future events, which have been in the World, were convincing evidences of the Truth of this Attribute, to the heathen philoſophers; And even the common Reaſon of the vulgar taught them, that it could not be imagined, that the Knowledge of the infinite and eternal God ſhould be in any reſpect finite. There is in this Matter, *one* Difficulty only, which has in all Ages employed the Speculation of conſidering perſons: Namely the following queſtion, *How Fore-knowledge in* God, *can be conſiſtent with Liberty of Action in* Men. In order to remove which difficulty, it may not be improper to premiſe two things; 1*ſt*, That our finite Underſtandings may very reaſonably be allowed, not to be able to comprehend all the ways of infinite Knowledge; *Job* xi. 7. *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection? It is as High as Heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than Hell, what canſt thou know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* But This Acknowledgment of the Incomprehenſibleneſs of the Ways of God, muſt always be underſtood with relation to ſuch things only, as do not imply any expreſs Contradiction: For whenever *That* is the caſe, it cannot be ſaid concerning *ſuch* things, that they are incomprehenſible, or what we cannot underſtand; but on the contrary, that they *are ſuch* things which we *do* clearly and diſtinctly underſtand, that they cannot poſſibly *be*: The neceſſary Falſity of all *Such* things being as clear to our Underſtandings, as the Self-evidence of the plaineſt Truths. Alſo, it muſt be obſerved, that this acknowledgment ought to be underſtood *only* of things *expreſly revealed*, not of any *humane* doctrines.

2*dly*, It is further neceſſary to premiſe, that in the matter before us, the Queſtion is not *whether Mens Actions be free; but whether or no, and How, that Freedom of Action, which makes Men to be Men, can be conſiſtent with Fore-knowledge of ſuch Actions.* For if theſe two things were really inconſiſtent, and could by no means be reconciled; it would follow, not, that *Mens Actions were not Free;* (for That would deſtroy *All* religion, and take away *all* the natural Attributes of God at once;) But on the other ſide it would follow that *ſuch free Actions* as *Mens* are, and without which Rational Creatures could not *be* Rational Creatures, were not the Objects of the Divine Fore-knowledge. And in ſuch caſe, it would be no more a Diminution of God's *Omniſcience*, not to *know* things impoſſible and contradictory to be known; than 'tis a diminution of his *Omnipotence*, not to be able to *do* things impoſſible and contradictory to be done. But This is *not* the Caſe: For theſe two things being premiſed, we may

SERM. XI.

Now to the Difficulty itſelf, *How Fore-knowledge in* God *can be conſiſtent with Liberty of Action in* Men, anſwer directly; that they *are therefore* conſiſtent, becauſe Fore-knowledge has *no Influence at all* upon the Things fore-known; and it has *therefore* no Influence upon them, becauſe Things would be juſt as they Are, and no otherwiſe, tho' there was no Fore-knowledge. Fore-knowledge, does not cauſe things to be; but Things that are to be hereafter, whether neceſſarily or freely, are the cauſe of its being fore-known that they *ſhall* ſo, whether neceſſarily or freely, be. The *Futurity* of free Actions, is exactly the *ſame*, and, in the nature of things themſelves, of the like *certainty* in *Event*, whether they *can*, or *could not* be, *fore-known*. And as *Our* knowing a thing to be, when we ſee it is, does not hinder an Action from being *Free*, notwithſtanding that it is then certain and cannot *but* be, when it is: ſo God's *foreſeeing* that any Action will freely be done, does not at all hinder its being Free, tho' he knows it *certainly*; becauſe *His fore-ſeeing* things to come, does no more influence or alter the Nature of things, than our *ſeeing* them when they are. The *Manner* of God's knowing *future free Actions*, muſt not indeed be, like his Fore-knowledge of things *neceſſary*; I ſay, it muſt not be by foreſeeing a continued *Chain of Cauſes*; For That would indeed deſtroy their Freedom: But it muſt be a Power, quite of another kind: A Power, whereof we can only have an obſcure glimpſe, in ſome ſuch manner as That which follows. What *one man* will freely do upon any particular occaſion, *another man* by obſervation and attention, may in ſome meaſure judge; and the wiſer the perſon be, who makes the obſervation, the more probable will his Judgment be, and the ſeldomer will he be deceived. An Angel, in the like caſe, would make a judgment of the future event, as much nearer to Certainty than that of the wiſeſt man, as the Angelick Nature and Faculties are ſuperiour to the Human. In God himſelf, whoſe Powers are all in every reſpect infinitely tranſcending thoſe of the higheſt Creatures, *This* Judgment of future free actions muſt needs be infallible, that is, as truly certain, (though entirely of a different kind,) as *That* Fore-knowledge which he has of neceſſary events by ſeeing their neceſſary chain of cauſes. Nor ought it to ſeem ſtrange, that this divine Fore-knowledge of future *free* Actions ſhould be entirely of a different Nature, from his Fore-knowledge of *neceſſary* events. For there is a not unlike diſtinction in ſome *others* alſo of the divine Attributes. The *Omnipreſence* of God, is an Attribute *neceſſarily* belonging to him, by abſolute Neceſſity of *Nature*, and altogether independent of his Will: The *Goodneſs* of God is likewiſe a *neceſſary* Attribute; yet not in the ſame manner as his Omnipreſence, by a mere abſolute neceſſity of Nature, but by the unalterable Rectitude of his *Will*; Which is the true reaſon, why we properly return him *Thanks* for being *Good*, but not for being *Omnipreſent*. Thus *Both* are neceſſary; and yet by a Neceſſity of a totally different ſort or kind. In like manner the *Fore-knowledge* of God, both That of *Neceſſary* and that of *free* Events, is in the iſſue of Things, equally *certain*; Yet in the one caſe This Certainty is entirely of a different nature from That in the other; It ariſing in the caſe of *neceſſary* events, from God's own fore-appointing a neceſſary chain of cauſes to produce thoſe events; but in the caſe of *free* events, it ariſes from, and depends upon, the mere futurity of the things themſelves.

To illuſtrate this matter by an Example. That *Chriſt ſhould die for the Sins of Men*, God not only fore-knew, but fore-appointed it alſo, and ſent him into the world on purpoſe for that End. That *Judas did betray our Saviour*, God fore-knew, but did not fore-appoint it; only he choſe on purpoſe into the number of his diſciples One ſuch perſon, the wickedneſs of whoſe *own* Heart, he *ſaw* would prompt him to accompliſh that Event.

That *Ahab* ſhould fall at *Ramoth-Gilead*, God foreſaw, and forewarned him of it; yet God's foreknowledge did not make it neceſſary for him to go up and periſh there; but the mere wickedneſs of his own Will, deſpiſing the divine admonition, as it was the only Cauſe of the Event, ſo was it likewiſe the only ground of the Fore-knowledge: And had *Ahab* been diſpoſed to repent at the Advice of the Prophet, it was in his own Power to have prevented his deſtruction;

deſtruction; and the Fore-knowledge of God, would Then have been accordingly, the Fore-knowledge of a contrary Event. SERM. XI.

The ſame may be underſtood in general concerning *all* exhortations offered to wicked perſons, which God beforehand knows that they will not obey. Concerning which if it be required, to what purpoſe then are they offered at all; the unreaſonableneſs of this objection will appear by conſidering, that according to the ſame argument, ſince God knew beforehand *every thing* in the whole Creation, therefore he ſhould never have created any thing at all. The true Anſwer plainly is: Whatever is in itſelf, and in the nature of Things, *reaſonable* to *be done*, 'tis fit *ſhould actually* be done: And 'tis never the more nor the leſs reaſonable, for things being known or not known beforehand. The reaſon of God's ſending exhortations to wicked men, is not that *he himſelf* is ignorant what they *will* do, but that upon *their own account* 'tis reaſonable they ſhould be ſo exhorted: And if the thing be reaſonable *in itſelf*, it cannot *ceaſe* to be ſo, upon the account of Fore-knowledge. And This, concerning the *Object* or *Extent* of the divine Knowledge: 'Tis a Knowledge of *all things* abſolutely, without exception; a Knowledge of all the *Actions* of Men, a Knowledge of all their *Thoughts*, a Knowledge of all *future* and even *contingent Events*.

2*dly*, With regard to the *Manner* of this divine Knowledge; tho' it is moſt unreaſonable to imagine we can in any meaſure poſſibly explain *in particular*, all the Ways, Manners, and Circumſtances of infinite Knowledge; yet ſome few *general* obſervations, ſuch as theſe which follow, may be very uſefully made by us upon this Head. That the divine Knowledge is not, for inſtance, as Ours, and probably that of Angels alſo, is: a knowledge of things *by degrees and parts*; ſeeing we can fix on but one ſide of a thing, and conſider it only in one view at once; But 'tis a *perfect* comprehenſion of every thing, in all poſſible reſpects *at a time*, and in all poſſible Circumſtances *together*. Again; it is not, as Ours, and poſſibly that of higher Beings than we, only a *ſuperficial and external* knowledge of things, but an *intimate and thorough proſpect of their very inmoſt nature and eſſence*, all things being *naked and opened* (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it) *to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*. Further; it is not, as Ours, and probably that of the higheſt created Beings more or leſs is, *confuſed and general*; but a *clear*, *diſtinct*, *and particular* knowledge of every even the minuteſt thing or circumſtance; a knowledge, which not *a hair of our head* eſcapes, and without which not a *ſparrow falls to the ground*. Laſtly, it is not, as Ours, *acquired with difficulty*, *conſideration*, *attention*, *and ſtudy*; but a Knowledge *neceſſarily and perpetually ariſing of itſelf*, and inſeparable even from the very exiſtence of him whoſe Eſſence is Omnipreſent. And This briefly with regard to the *Manner* of the divine Knowledge.

3*dly*, As to the *Certainty* of it, (which was the laſt Circumſtance I propoſed to ſpeak to,) I need but juſt mention, that whereas *Our* Knowledge, (even of thoſe things which we are *well capable* of underſtanding,) is diſturbed and hindred by innumerable cauſes, by education and prejudice, by temper and intereſt, by cuſtom, humour, and diſorders of mind or body; All which we muſt conſtantly endeavour to conquer; and *may* ſo far do it, as to eſcape all *fatal* errors, tho' we cannot avoid numberleſs miſtakes: And whereas the Knowledge even of the Higheſt *Angels*, is always mixed with *ſome* degree of Uncertainty; as in that remarkable expreſſion of the *Archangel* to *Tobias*, *Moreover I* ſuppoſe (ſays he:) he was not *certain*; but, *I ſuppoſe*, (ſaith he) *that ſhe ſhall bear thee children:* The divine *Knowledge* on the contrary is in all things abſolutely *infallible*, without the *leaſt poſſibility* of any *degree* of being *deceived*.

III. It remains, that I conclude with a few Practical Inferences from the whole.

And, 1*ſt*, If the divine Knowledge is *perfect*, it is a proper Object of our Admiration and Honour. Of our *Praiſes* indeed and *Thankſgivings*, his Goodneſs, Mercy, and Compaſſion are more properly the Grounds: But to be *admired and adored*, is what every Perfection in the divine Nature equally claims. The *ſmall glimpſes* of Knowledge which appear in *Men*; if they be skilled in languages, that fictitious Learning which ariſes merely from our Diſperſion and Con-

SERM. XI.

Confuſions; if they have improved themſelves in the ſtudy of Philoſophy, Hiſtory, or other Sciences; even *theſe ſmall glimpſes* of Knowledge, cannot but raiſe in us *ſome* proportion of Eſteem. What Veneration then is due to *Him*, whoſe Knowledge is *in Himſelf* infinite, and who is the ſole Author of whatever Knowledge is found in *Any Other*. And how ſhould this teach us to think humbly and meanly of our ſelves, and of all Creatures, and of all their poſſible acquirements! to conſider, that we *have* and *know* nothing, but what we have received! (*For who has put Wiſdom in the inward parts? or who has given Underſtanding to the Heart?* Job xxxviii. 36. That *Knowledge*, and all other Faculties in created Beings, not only in *Men*, but even in the Higheſt *Angels* alſo, are but little *Images* and *Shadows* of Perfection; faint and derivative rays of Light, from the incomprehenſible fountain of Glory! in compariſon of whom, our Knowledge itſelf is Ignorance, and our Light as Darkneſs!

2*dly*, If God knows all, even our moſt *ſecret* actions; then ought we conſtantly to live under the Power of this Conviction, in all holy and godly converſation, both publickly and in private. 'Twas with great *Elegancy*, that the antient Heathen Poets deſcribed the *Sun* in the Firmament, as overſeeing and beholding all things; but the Deſcription is *True*, in propriety and ſtrictneſs of Speech, only of the all-ſeeing Eye of the *Father of Lights*. And hence appears the Vanity, of worſhipping Saints and Idols, or any other Beings which know not all things. Which Folly *Elijah* excellently ridiculed, when he told the prophets of *Baal*, that their God was *purſuing, or talking, or in a journey, or perhaps he ſleepeth and muſt be awaked.*

Ἥλιος ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει.

3*dly*, If God knows not only our moſt ſecret Actions, but alſo even our *Hearts and Thoughts*; This ſhows us, the Folly of all *Hypocriſy*; the Obligation, to Purity of Heart; the reaſonableneſs of the Command, *thou ſhalt not covet*; and the true Comfort of ſecret unaffected Piety.

Mat. vi. 31, &c. Nos cæcâ magnâq; cupidine ducti, Conjugium petimus, partumque uxoris, at illis Notum qui pueri, qualiſque futura ſit uxor.

4*thly*, If God knows all *future events*, then may we ſafely depend and truſt on his Providence, without being *over-ſolicitous* for the time to come. *We* are very apt to covet Riches, Honour, or Power; But *God* ſees how perhaps theſe very things we ſo earneſtly deſire, would be hurtful to us; or how ill we ſhould bear it, when perhaps they were again on a ſudden taken from us.

For the ſame reaſon therefore, neither ought we on the contrary to *boaſt our ſelves of to morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth*; Prov. xxvii. 1. xix. 21. *Jam.* iv. 13. Nor can wicked men, *at all excuſe* themſelves, upon account of God's *Foreknowledge* of their *Actions*; For it has been before ſhown, that between theſe things there is no connexion.

Ζεῦ Βασιλεῦ, τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ καὶ ἴυχομένοις καὶ ἀεύκτοις Ἄμμε δίδου τὰ δὲ λυγρὰ καὶ ἐυχομένοις ἀπαλέξειν.

5*thly*, If God *Alone* knows future events, as appears by the prophets challenging falſe Gods to foretel ſuch events; then hence appears the Wickedneſs and Folly of pretending to foreknow things by the Help either of Men or Devils. 'Tis obſervable that no perſons are *leſs careful* to aſcribe to *God* his due Honour, than thoſe who are very ready to aſcribe to *other* Powers, to deluſive Impoſtures or Diabolical Artifices, *more* than their due. And God accordingly deſcribes himſelf, as taking Delight in *fruſtrating the tokens of the Liars, and making diviners mad, as turning wiſe men backward, and making their knowledge fooliſh*, Iſ. xliv. 25.

Laſtly, If God *Alone* knoweth the Thoughts of men, then neither ought *We* to be forward in judging *others*, any further than their Actions give plain reaſon ſo to do; For *who art thou that judgeſt another man's ſervant? to his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth*, Rom. xiv. 4; and 1 *Cor.* iv. 5. neither ſhould we be too much concerned at *Others* judging uncharitably concerning *Us*, if in our Conſciences we ſtand innocent before God, and have not by indiſcreet behaviour given men juſt occaſion of offence.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

Of the WISDOM of GOD.

COL. ii. 3.

In whom are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom.

IN the foregoing chapter, the Apoſtle having very eloquently magnified the *Grace* (that is, the gracious and merciful Declarations) of God in the Goſpel, ver. 6. and 12. and having ſet forth in the loftieſt Expreſſions the Dignity of the Perſon of Chriſt, ver. 15. and the glorious *Effects* of his Sufferings, upon thoſe who thro' Repentance and renewed Obedience were made partakers of the reconciliation purchaſed by his Blood, ver. 21. concludes with a joyful mention of *his own* Sufferings alſo, after the example of Chriſt, ver. 24. Of this Goſpel, ſays he, I *Paul* was made a Miniſter, *Who now rejoice in my Sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt in my Fleſh, for his Body's ſake which is the Church.* The Church of *Rome* has found, in this expreſſion of the Apoſtle, the doctrine of the *Merit of the Saints:* For if St. *Paul* filled up that which was behind of the Sufferings of Chriſt, for his Body the Church; it follows, they think, that the Sufferings of St. *Paul* muſt conſequently be in proportion a Stock of Merit for the Church. But the real Meaning of the Apoſtle's words is very different from what they vainly conceive. For, *to fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt*, does not ſignify to *compleat* any thing that lacked to be *added* after the Sufferings of Chriſt, as if the Sufferings of Chriſt were not in point of Merit ſufficient of themſelves; but it ſignifies, to *accompliſh* that which remained to be *fulfilled* of thoſe prophecies, which foretold that after the Sufferings of Chriſt,

SERM. XII.

SERM. XII.

his Servants likewiſe ſhould therein follow his example. And theſe Sufferings of the Apoſtle's, *were* alſo indeed *for his Body's ſake which is the Church*; that is, for the Benefit indeed, not of the Church in *future Ages*, by way of *Merit*; but of the Church *then preſent*, by way of *Example* and *Encouragement* and *bearing Teſtimony* to the Truth; On which greatly depended the propagation of the Goſpel.

In this 2*d* chapter, the Apoſtle proceeds to expreſs his great *Concern* for the *Coloſſians*, and his earneſt deſire of their *Improvement* both in the *Knowledge* and in the *Practice* of Religion; ver. 1. and 2, *how great Conflict I have for you*, — that your *hearts* may be — *knit together in* love, *and unto all riches of the full Aſſurance of* Underſtanding; *to the Acknowledgment of the myſtery of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt*; *In whom are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom.*

To the acknowledgment of the myſtery of God; that is, to the publick advancement of the Goſpel, and of the Glory of God therein manifeſted; and that all men may acknowledge the myſterious or wonderful Love of God towards mankind, Now revealed by the preaching of his Son. The words next following, *of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt*, are not rightly rendered; For they ſound in that tranſlation, as if *God* and *the Father* were two diſtinct perſons; Whereas they ought to be rendered, *of God*, even *the Father*; *and alſo of Chriſt*. *In* whom, adds the Apoſtle, (ſumming up his whole Argument by way of Exclamation in the words of the Text,) *are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom.* The word, *In whom*, may by the conſtruction equally be referred, either to *God*, or to *Chriſt*; *God even the Father, and Chriſt*; in whom, in each or either of whom, *are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom.* If it be underſtood as referring to *God, even the Father*; then it will be a declaration or acknowledgment of his *Wiſdom in* general; that He, is the Author and Fountain of *all* Wiſdom. But if it be applied to *Chriſt*; then it muſt be underſtood of the *Wiſdom of the Goſpel in* particular; that in Him was treaſured up all *that* Wiſdom of God, which was to be manifeſted to mankind by the Goſpel. In *either* way of underſtanding it, the Senſe is not much different; and in *Both*, it is a very uſeful Subject for our Meditations; *the Wiſdom of God* more *generally*, or *the Wiſdom of God manifeſted in Chriſt* more *particularly.*

WISDOM, is the right Uſe or Exerciſe of Knowledge; and differs from Knowledge, as the *Uſe* of a Power or Faculty differs from the *Faculty itſelf.* 'Tis therefore, in the divine Nature, a diſtinct Attribute from that of *Knowledge*; and, as ſuch, I ſhall accordingly conſider it in the following Diſcourſe. And herein, for Method's ſake, I ſhall 1*ſt* endeavour to ſhow briefly in general, that God *muſt* of Neceſſity be infinitely *Wiſe*; 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider more diſtinctly and in particular, the different *Manifeſtations* of this divine Wiſdom, in his *Works*, in his *Government*, and in his *Laws*: and 3*dly*, I ſhall ſhow of what *Uſe* theſe Meditations may be unto us in Practice.

I. In the *Firſt* place, that God muſt of Neceſſity be infinitely Wiſe, appears from hence; that, being Himſelf the Alone original Cauſe and Author of all things; and knowing what each of their Powers and Faculties can produce; and ſeeing at one View all the poſſible Circumſtances and Diſpoſitions of things, all their mutual Relations and Dependencies, all their poſſible Compoſitions or Diviſions, their Variations and Changes, their Fitneſs or Suitableneſs each to certain reſpective Ends and Purpoſes; beholding (I ſay) all theſe things at once, 'tis evident he cannot but of Neceſſity always know, without poſſibility of Error, *What* is the *Beſt and Propereſt End* to be brought about, in each one of the poſſible infinite caſes or methods of diſpoſing things; and *which* are the fitteſt *Means* to that End; and *how* thoſe Means may beſt be *ordered and directed*, to accompliſh it accordingly: And, having no wrong Inclination poſſibly to change his Will, any more than oppoſition poſſibly to withſtand his Power; 'tis plain he will always actually effect what in right and reaſon is fitteſt to be done. Now This is infinite or perfect Wiſdom; To know always the Beſt *End*; to ſee always the *Means* that will produce that End; to underſtand exactly *how to apply* thoſe Means to the accompliſhing that End; and to have always a right and invariable *Inclination or Will*, to act accordingly.

Again;

SERM. XII.

Again; every Unwiſe Action, or circumſtance of Action, muſt neceſſarily proceed, either from ſhortneſs of Underſtanding, or from defect of Power, or from Faultineſs of Will; Either that the Agent *knows* not, or that he *can* not, or that he *will* not do what is beſt. But now from each of theſe Defects, the Perfection of the divine Nature is infinitely removed. Therefore every Action of God, muſt of Neceſſity, (meaning in the *moral* ſenſe of the word *Neceſſity*) be what is *abſolutely* and *in itſelf* and *upon the whole* moſt Wiſe.

From *ſome* or *other* of theſe Defects, in *ſome* Degree, or in *ſome* Circumſtances, no *Other* Being can be exempt. *No other Being* therefore is perfectly Wiſe: But the Perfection, as *in* God it is complete and abſolute, ſo *to* him Alone it is confined: The Apoſtle frequently ſtiling him, with the greateſt Juſtice and Truth, *God* Only *Wiſe*. Yet *Vain man* would *be Wiſe*; Wiſe *without*, and Wiſe *in oppoſition to*, his Maker: Profanely ſometimes, and Atheiſtically Wiſe; *though man be born like a wild aſſes colt*, Job xi. 12. that is, tho' being ſhort-lived as the Beaſts that periſh, he could neither *give* himſelf Being, nor *continue* it to himſelf when he had it; neither knows what things have been before him, nor what ſhall be after him, nor the millionth part of the things that are preſent with him. Philoſophers, when beyond an humble Admiration of the Works of God, and a ſober inquiry into the nature and operations of ſecond cauſes under the direction of the firſt, they indulge themſelves in feigning Schemes out of their own Imagination, and attempt in *explaining Nature* to exclude the God *of Nature*; *profeſſing themſelves Wiſe, they become Fools*, Rom. i. 22. and under the Notion of Science, vent the moſt ridiculous extravagancies. Politicians, Tyrants, the great Oppreſſors and Deſtroyers of the Earth, lay what they call Wiſe and long forecaſted Deſigns. But yet, as *Elihu* well obſerves, *Job.* xxxii. 9. *Great men are not always Wiſe:* For God often turneth their Wiſdom backward, and maketh their Counſel Fooliſhneſs; blaſting their deepeſt projects with the Breath of his Mouth, and diſperſing them as a Spider's web; by Storms and Tempeſts, by Fire and Earthquakes, by Diſeaſes and Death, by potent Enemies or treacherous Friends, and innumerable other unforeſeen or unavoidable Accidents. But what need we mention theſe greater and more enormous Follies? The true Wiſdom even of the *beſt* and moſt *reaſonable* men is mixt with perpetual Weakneſs; and our wiſe Actions bear no proportion to our Infirmities. Nay, even Angels themſelves, thoſe great and glorious Spirits, who always behold the Face of God, and ſurround the Throne of infinite Wiſdom; yet even of theſe it is elegantly affirmed in the Book of *Job.* ch. iv. 18. that *he puts no truſt in his Servants, and his Angels he chargeth with Folly:* With *Folly*; Not like the Follies of Vain *Men;* But with ſuch *Imperfections* as are *comparatively Folly*, in the Eyes of Him who alone is Wiſdom and Perfection itſelf.

Having thus briefly ſhown in general, that God *muſt* of Neceſſity be infinitely Wiſe, and that *He Only* is ſo; I proceed Now in the

II*d* place, To conſider more diſtinctly and in particular, the different *Manifeſtations* of this divine Wiſdom, in his *Works*, in his *Government*, and in his *Laws*. The Wiſdom of God in his *Works*, is the Demonſtration of his *Being*; The Wiſdom of God in his *Government*, is the great Confirmation of the Truth of his *Providence* with regard to Men; and the Wiſdom of God in his *Laws*, is the Excellency and Recommendation of *Religion*.

1*ſt*, If we conſider the *Works* of God, and view this ſtately Fabrick which his hands have made; we ſtill find, that from the brighteſt Star in the firmament of Heaven, to the meaneſt Pebble upon the face of the Earth, there is no part of Matter, great or ſmall, wherein the Wiſdom of the Creator does not *more* clearly and undeniably appear, than the Skill of an Architect is manifeſted by a Building, or the Judgment of an Artificer by the completeneſs of his Work. In almoſt every part of the Creation, the *Variety* of *Things themſelves* is *greater*; and the *different* Uſes which *every ſingle thing* is with the utmoſt exquiſiteneſs fitted to ſerve at once, are *more in Number*, than the Wiſeſt and Greateſt Philoſophers, aſſiſted by the perpetually growing diſcoveries of increaſing ages, are ever able to exhauſt or enumerate. So that preſent and future Times, after employing the Sagacity of all Generations, ſhall ſtill

SERM. XII.

ſtill with the ſame Truth as at firſt, repeat the words of *Job*; who, having at large deſcribed the Greatneſs of the Works of God in Heaven and in Earth, concludes ch. xxvi. 14. *Lo, theſe are* part *of his ways; but how* little *a portion is heard of him!* Or, *as Solomon* expreſſes it, *Eccleſ.* xi. 5. *As thou knoweſt not what is the way of the Spirit*; (Of *the Wind*, it ſhould be tranſlated; according to that of our Saviour, *Thou heareſt the Sound thereof, but knoweſt not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*;) *As thou knoweſt not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even ſo thou knoweſt not the works of God who maketh all.* Or, as the wiſe Author of the book of *Eccleſiaſticus*; who, having given a noble deſcription of all the parts of the viſible Creation known in *his* time, ſums up all at laſt with this judicious exclamation, ch. xliii. 32. *There are ſtill hid greater things than theſe, and we have ſeen but a few of his Works.* Nevertheleſs, while to the *largeſt* Underſtandings, the Number of Things, and the Variety of the Uſes to which each of them is fitted, are more than can *in particular* be poſſibly comprehended; 'tis yet at the ſame time, even to the *meaneſt* capacities, made moſt obviouſly apparent in *general*, through the *whole* frame of Nature, that every thing is with conſummate Wiſdom adapted to the beſt and nobleſt Uſes. *The inviſible things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made.* The *Heavenly* Bodies, by their being fitly placed to communicate to us in a due proportion their Heat and Light and other Influences, by never-failing Viciſſitudes of Day and Night, Winter and Summer, Seed-time and Harveſt, *declare*, even to the moſt vulgar Underſtandings, *the Glory of God; and the firmament ſhoweth his handy work*, Pſ. xix. 1. For, had theſe Bodies been of any other Bigneſs, at any other Diſtance, or in any other Motion than they Now are; (which ſhows their preſent conſtitution to be the effect of perfect Wiſdom;) the world could by no means have ſubſiſted. By the *Sun*'s being bigger or nearer than it is, we had neceſſarily been conſumed with Heat; By its being either ſmaller or farther off, we had as unavoidably been deſtroyed with Cold; By any inequality in its Motion, a Succeſſion of *Both* extremes, Heat and Cold after each other, would have brought upon us the ſame deſtruction, as a Perpetuity of *Either*. The *Earth* whereon we dwell, being ſo beautifully adorned with Plants and Animals, ſo bountifully furniſhed with Seas and Rivers, Air and Winds, Clouds and Rain, Metals and Minerals, for Uſe, for Ornament, for Delight; gives daily demonſtration, even to perſons of the loweſt capacity, if not perverted and ſtupified thro' Vice and Debauchery; that *the Lord by* Wiſdom *founded the Earth*, that *by Underſtanding he eſtabliſhed the Heavens*; that *by his Knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down dew*, Prov. iii. 19: Or, as the Prophet expreſſes it, *Jer.* li. 15. that *he made the Earth by his Power, eſtabliſhed the World by his* Wiſdom, *and ſtretched out the Heaven by his Underſtanding.* Had any of theſe things been diſpoſed in any *other* manner or proportion than they are, the Earth had been no place of Habitation: With more *Waters*, the whole had been made unſerviceable by moiſture; with *leſs*, it had been deſtroyed thro' drought. The Air, with the violence of *ſtronger Winds*, would have overturned all things: and without *Any*, it would have putrified by ſtagnation. Nay, even thoſe *inconvenient* things, as they may ſeem at firſt ſight, by removing of which, ſome profane Philoſophers of old pretended that they could have mended the ſtructure of the World; even *theſe very things* themſelves, which have been brought as objections againſt the Wiſdom of the Creator, are found upon a cloſer view to be by no means uſeleſs or unneceſſary. *Wide Seas* are neceſſary for the producing of Rain; *Mountains and barren lands* for preſerving the Air healthful; and *Storms and Tempeſts* for purifying it when corrupt; and other particular things ſtill *more noxious*, if they have not likewiſe their more ſecret Uſes, yet at leaſt they are proper Inſtruments in the hand of Providence for correcting and awakening a careleſs and irreligious World.

If now from the World itſelf, we turn our eyes more particularly upon *Man*, the principal viſible Inhabitant whom God has placed therein, and the numberleſs *other Creatures* wherewith he hath repleniſhed it; no underſtanding can be ſo low and mean, no Heart ſo ſtupid and inſenſible, (unleſs infatuated with the abſurd

abſurd prejudices and witchcraft of Atheiſm,) as not to ſee plainly, that nothing but infinite and perfect Wiſdom, could have produced that *infinite Variety of Living Creatures*, ſo *like*, and at the ſame time ſo *unlike* to each other, that in That boundleſs Diverſity, the innumerable particulars wherein each creature differs from all others, ſhould yet every one of them have its proper Beauty, and its peculiar, adequate, and ſingular Uſe. And over all Theſe, is placed *Man*, the Lord of all, made in the Image of God; made capable *Himſelf* of adoring his great Creator, and of turning *all other things* likewiſe to his Praiſe. The *inanimate* part of the World, being void of *Senſe*; the *animate* part, being void of *Reaſon*; cannot praiſe God any otherwiſe, than through the Mouth of *Man*: Without *Him*, the Heavens could not declare the Glory of God, nor the Earth ſhew forth his handy-work. But *by and through Man, all things* extol their Maker; and, by affording materials for *Our* Songs of Praiſe, *they themſelves* may juſtly be ſaid, not only without any impropriety of ſpeech, but on the contrary indeed by a moſt elegant and lively Figure, as it is exemplified in the *Song of the Three Children*; *they themſelves*, even the *inanimate* creatures, even all *the works of the Lord*, may themſelves be ſaid to praiſe him, to *praiſe him and magnify him for ever*. In the *Body* of Man, the Wiſdom of God has manifeſted itſelf in ſo putting together an inconceivable number of different minute parts, as that none of them could be ſpared or otherwiſe placed, but to the great damage, if not deſtruction of the whole. *O Lord, I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and That my Soul knoweth right well. My Bones are not hid from thee, though I be made ſecretly, and faſhioned beneath in the Earth. Thine eyes did ſee my Subſtance, yet being unperfect, and in thy Book were all my Members written; Which day by day were faſhioned, when as yet there was none of them*, Pſ. cxxxix. 13. But ſtill *more* than in all theſe, more admirably and in a more exalted manner, appears the Divine Wiſdom in the creation of the *Soul* of Man; a Subſtance endued with thoſe wonderful Faculties, of *Thinking*, *Underſtanding*, *Judging*, *Reaſoning*, *Chuſing*, *Acting*, and, which is the End and Excellency of all, *Religion*; the Power of knowing, obeying, imitating, and praiſing its Creator; Which yet neither It, nor ſtill ſuperiour Beings, Angels and Archangels, or the whole Hoſt of Heaven, can worthily or ſufficiently do; for, *who can expreſs the mighty acts of the Lord, or ſhew forth all his Praiſe?* Pſ. cvi. 2.

SERM. XII.

The *more* all theſe works of God are ſtudied, and the more diligently they are inquired and ſearched into, the more and the clearer Marks of Wiſdom continually appear in them. And perhaps this very thing itſelf, is none of the ſmalleſt inſtances of the divine Wiſdom in the contrivance of the whole; that whereas in the language of Scripture, and to the common ſenſe and obvious judgment of pious perſons of the *meaneſt* capacities among the Vulgar, God himſelf appears to be the immediate Author of all the operations of Nature; but by thoſe who have gained ſome ſmall conceited Knowledge in Philoſophy, theſe things are generally ſo aſcribed to the efficiency of ſecond Cauſes, that God is repreſented either as not interpoſing at all, or ſo remotely as hardly to be taken notice of; it has again by thoſe, who have made the *greateſt* and trueſt improvements in natural Knowledge, been diſcovered and clearly proved, that all ſecond Cauſes, (excepting Men and Angels, which are free Agents,) all *other* ſecond Cauſes, (as they are uſually ſtiled,) are really no Cauſes, and have no efficiency at all, but are *mere inſtruments* by which God perpetually acts, and is Himſelf the conſtant (if not Only) Agent in what we vulgarly call the *Courſe of Nature*. So that the beſt and perfecteſt Philoſophy has ended where the natural Senſe of Mankind began; ſtrongly confirming and reſcuing That Truth out of the hands of half-learned vain Scepticks, which was originally the univerſal Voice of Nature, and the firſt and moſt obvious Manifeſtation of God. And the Wiſdom of the great Creator has in *This*, as in all other matters, illuſtriouſly appeared; that in order to our *true Knowledge of God*, wherein All men both learned and ignorant are equally concerned, all *other* ſorts of Learning and Knowledge, (tho' very uſeful and valuable,) yet are ſo far from being abſolutely *neceſſary*, that provided there be not wanting an

SERM. XII.

honeſt and ſincere intention, it will at leaſt, with regard to all theſe *other* things, be found true in proportion, that *he who gathered much, had nothing over; and he who gathered little, had no lack.*

And thus much concerning the Wiſdom of God, as made known by his *Works.*

2. I am in the next place to conſider, the Manifeſtations of the ſame divine Wiſdom in his *Government* of the World. By which I do not now underſtand *That Providence* by which he preſerves and governs the *natural World*; For This was included under the former Head; But by his *Government of the World*, I would here be underſtood to mean, his *Government of rational Creatures*, of *Angels* and of *Men*. Now concerning the Wiſdom of Providence in *This* Government, 'tis not reaſonable to make any poſitive judgment, from only a partial Knowledge of a few of its proceedings in ſome ſmall portions of Time. For, not of the Government of a *Kingdom* or a *Family*, much leſs of the Government of the *Univerſe*, can any one make a right and true judgment, without ſeeing the Iſſue and Deſign of the *Whole*. Yet even in all the *ſingle* parts of the divine Oeconomy, if we conſider the Hiſtory of Providence, we ſhall find ſufficient marks of Wiſdom, to convince and ſatisfy us, that the Diſpoſition of the whole will in the end appear as much wiſer than can now be conceived; as the Structure of the natural World, after the Diſcoveries of many Ages, has been found greater and nobler, than the mean conjectures and narrow Notions of the Antient Philoſophers apprehended. *Angels*, having been at firſt created in ſo perfect a ſtate, that nothing leſs than a total and incorrigible corruption, could make them chuſe to *leave their own Habitation, Jude* v. 6. it was therefore fit that no place ſhould be left for their Return, but that they ſhould be *reſerved in chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day.* The State of *Man* in *Innocence* was in great Wiſdom furniſhed abundantly with all things neceſſary to the Happineſs of ſuch a Creature in ſuch a State: Yet, that his Obedience ſhould be tried by God's reſerving *one* homage to himſelf, in acknowledgment of his being Author and Lord of all, cannot but be confeſſed to be more becoming a Wiſe and Supreme Governour, than if he had appointed no ſuch trial, nor required any inſtance of Obedience at all. For This ſeems to be the meaning of the forbidden Tree; poſſibly not that in its own nature it was better or worſe than the other Fruits of the Earth; but that God reſerved it as an inſtance of homage to himſelf: And the curioſity of trying what was forbidden, and curioſity of knowing good and evil, became to our firſt Parents a Temptation to Sin. By complying with which Temptation when Man had actually ſinned; he who before was immortal, juſtly became ſubject to Death. Not that his Body was, *before* the Fall, *naturally Immortal*; (which can hardly be conceived:) but that God, either by tranſlating him, or by glorifying him, or by *any other* means unknown to us, (but in general aptly figured by the *Tree of Life*;) would have preſerved him from Death, which by Sin only was to come actually upon him. Nevertheleſs even from That Mortality, which he brought upon himſelf by Sin, God ſtill left him a Hope of reſtitution; becauſe in his nature he was more frail and fallible than Angels, and fell not like them through incorrigible malice, but with a mixture of Weakneſs. The Light of *Nature*, and the Tradition of God's revealing himſelf in Paradiſe, were ſufficient Guides to the Poſterity of *Adam* in the firſt Ages. In oppoſition to which Light when men had by degrees corrupted themſelves more and more, even to an univerſal Defection; the Wiſdom of God manifeſted itſelf in deſtroying that generation by a Flood, for an Example to all future Ages; and yet not deſtroying them ſo utterly, but that a few Witneſſes were left, for a better Teſtimony to thoſe that ſhould come after, than if a total Deſtruction had made neceſſary a new Creation. After This, the Wiſdom of God ſhewed forth itſelf in inflicting proper particular judgments for particular crying Sins; deſtroying the inhabitants of *Sodom*, for their unnatural Luſts, by Fire from Heaven; puniſhing the *Jews*, as often as they fell into Idolatry, with *that recompence of their error which was meet*, by ſuffering them to be carried captive into Idolatrous Nations, and diſperſed in ſo unexampled a manner, as to remain a ſtanding inſtance of Providence in the ſight of all Nations even at This day; and frequently requiting alſo *particular* eminent perſons

in

in Hiſtory, ſuch as *Agag*, *Adonibezek*, and the like, with the ſame meaſure that they had meted unto Others: Yet at the ſame time more generally *forbearing* wicked perſons, that they might have ſpace for *Repentance*; and on the contrary, frequently *diſciplining* the good, chaſtiſing whom he loved, and weaning them from the World. So that even thoſe very proceedings of Providence, which were vulgarly looked upon as the chief objections againſt it, his afflicting the good and ſparing the evil, appeared, when rightly conſidered, to be on the contrary none of the ſmalleſt inſtances of its Wiſdom.

Upon the whole; the Patriarchs and the *Jews* were a ſtanding Theocracy, and perpetual Teſtimony againſt Idolatry; as a *Light* of true Religion, *upon a Hill*, held forth unto all Nations. And the Wiſdom of that *Jewiſh* Inſtitution appeared particularly in This, that by a number of rites in the worſhip of the *true* God, they were preſerved from running after falſe Gods ſerved by their neighbouring nations; and thoſe rites were at the ſame time, both emblems of moral Purity, and Types of Chriſt: By whoſe coming at laſt in the fulneſs of Time, the Wiſdom of God moſt of all conſpicuouſly manifeſted itſelf, in bringing Life and Immortality to Light, and diſcovering plainly how all the various Scenes and Diſpenſations of Providence through the courſe of all Ages in this World, ſhould at the final Judgment terminate in a juſt retribution of reward and puniſhment to every ſingle perſon according to his deſert. But this belongs more properly to the next Head, *viz.* the manifeſtation of the Wiſdom of God in his *Laws*.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

Of the WISDOM of GOD.

COL. ii. 3.

In whom are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom.

SERM. XIII.

IN a former Diſcourſe upon theſe Words I have ſhown, *1ſt* in general, That God *muſt* of Neceſſity be infinitely Wiſe; and *2dly*, I propoſed to conſider, more diſtinctly and in particular, the different *Manifeſtations* of this divine Wiſdom, in the *Works* of God, in his *Government*, and in his *Laws*. The Two former of theſe conſiderations, *viz.* the *Works* of God, and his *Government* of the World by Providence, I have already gone through: The *3d* and *laſt*, Which is the Manifeſtation of the Wiſdom of God in his *Laws*, will be the Subject of the preſent Diſcourſe. Now the *primary* and *original Law* of God, is the *Law of Nature*; That eternal and unchangeable Law of Morality, which neceſſarily ariſes from the *Nature* of Creatures, and from their *Relation* to God and to each other. And the Wiſdom of *This* Law, is the very ſame as the Wiſdom of God's Creation it ſelf; being nothing elſe, than the univerſal Benefit and Happineſs of all reaſonable Creatures, ariſing from their acting according to that *Nature* which God has given them, and according to the reſpective *Relations* wherein they are placed thereby.

The *next Law* of God given to Men, was the *Moſaick* Inſtitution: (For the ſeveral Appearances of God to the *Patriarchs*, were but ſo many revealed confirmations of the Law of Nature:) And the *Wiſdom* of *That* Inſtitution given to the *Jews* by *Moſes* appeared by its being fitted, by a number of Rites and Ceremonies uſed in the Service of the *True* God, to preſerve them from the numerous Temptations of that idolatrous worſhip paid to *Falſe* Gods, wherewith all

all the Nations were overſpread around them. Which Rites were alſo at the ſame time, both apt Emblems of moral Purity, and Types of what was after to be accompliſhed by Chriſt. Upon which account, St. *Paul* elegantly deſcribes the Uſe of *the Law*, that *it was their* School-maſter *to bring them unto Chriſt, that they might be juſtified by Faith*, Gal. iii. 24. *by Faith*, that is, not by bare *Belief* in oppoſition to *Obedience*, but by the obedience of that Chriſtian *Religion* which was by way of eminence called by the name of *Faith*, as the Jewiſh *Religion* had been ſtiled *the Law*. But Theſe things I do but juſt mention, as preparatory to what follows. SERM. XIII.

The *Laſt* and *Great* Manifeſtation of the Wiſdom of God in his *Laws*, is *the Goſpel itſelf*; that plenary and final Revelation of the Will of God by Chriſt, upon account of which, Chriſt is ſtiled *the* Wiſdom *of* God, 1 *Cor.* i. 24: And the words of the Text itſelf, tho', they be indeed of ſuch ambiguous conſtruction, that they may poſſibly enough be underſtood of *the Wiſdom of* God *the* Father, as one of the divine Attributes, in *General*; or of *the Wiſdom of* Chriſt, *in general*, as being that divine Perſon *in whom dwelt the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*; yet, conſidering the occaſion and manner upon which they are introduced, it ſeems to be their moſt natural meaning and intent to affirm with regard only to *the Goſpel in* particular, that *in Chriſt are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom*. For the Apoſtle having in the foregoing verſe been ſpeaking concerning *the acknowledgment of the* Myſtery *of God the Father and of Chriſt*; by which myſtery he plainly means the Goſpel; muſt reaſonably be underſtood, when he adds immediately theſe next words, *all the Treaſures of Wiſdom*, to intend ſtill to expreſs thereby the ſame myſtery. The Goſpel therefore is here ſtiled by the Apoſtle, Col. ii. 3, *all the Treaſures of Wiſdom*; that is, all the treaſures of *That* Wiſdom, which God intended to make known to the World by Chriſt. And becauſe it is *That* particular inſtance of the divine Wiſdom, in *which*, of all others, we are *moſt* concerned; 'tis therefore fit we ſhould more diſtinctly inlarge upon it. Now in order to ſet forth more clearly the Wiſdom of God in this Diſpenſation; 'tis neceſſary to obſerve in the firſt place, that *Wiſdom* conſiſts principally in two things; in chuſing to purſue the moſt excellent *Ends*; and in accompliſhing thoſe Ends by the beſt and fitteſt, tho' oftentimes the moſt unlikely, *means*. Now the *Ends* of the Goſpel are, in the firſt place That great and *univerſal* Deſign, which both *This* and *in general all* Other actions of God, do ultimately tend to and terminate in; *viz.* the eſtabliſhing *univerſal Righteouſneſs* and *Happineſs* through the whole World, which is the Kingdom of God. But then *more particularly*, and *in order to that* general *Deſign*, the principal Ends of *This Diſpenſation in* particular, are: 1*ſt* To vindicate the Juſtice of God, and the Honour of his Laws and Government; and to ſhow his irreconcileable Hatred againſt Sin: 2*dly*, To manifeſt at the ſame time, and in a conſiſtent manner, his Mercy and Compaſſion towards Sinners: 3*dly*, To ſhow the abſolute Neceſſity of Repentance to Sinners, and of their effectual Amendment and Reformation; and the Impoſſibility of Pardon without it: and 4*thly*, To give to Them who are in This Manner truly Penitent, an aſſured Hope, that they ſhall be Objects of the Divine Mercy ſo illuſtriouſly manifeſted in the Goſpel; and to inſtruct and aſſiſt them in their Duty accordingly. Theſe are *Ends*, well becoming the Wiſdom of the ſupreme Governour of the World, to intend and proſecute. And in the *accompliſhing* theſe Ends through *the Goſpel*, by *Means* in reality ſo excellently fitted to their reſpective Ends; and yet ſome of them ſo *unexpected*, and others to human Judgment ſo *improbable of Succeſs*, has the divine *Wiſdom* more illuſtriouſly appeared, than in any other diſpenſation of Providence known to us. In the

1*ſt* place; the *Firſt* End or Deſign of the Goſpel, is to vindicate the *Juſtice* of God, and the *Honour* of his Laws and Government; and to ſhow his irreconcileable *Hatred againſt Sin*. When Man had preſumptuouſly ſinned by tranſgreſſing a plain Command of his ſupreme Governor; 'tis manifeſt God could not but be diſpleaſed at ſo unreaſonable an Action, and his Juſtice would neceſſarily call for Puniſhment: Neceſſarily; Not perhaps by any abſolute neceſſity of *Nature*; as if God by his ſupreme dominion and authority *could not*

SERM. XIII.

have forgiven Offences committed againſt himſelf, freely and without any Satisfaction, If he had ſo pleaſed: For every Prince *upon Earth*, every *Superiour* whatſoever, every *private* offended perſon, *has That* power; if he *thinks fit* to exerciſe it: Nay, in ſome Caſes, we are *commanded* to forgive offences, without requiring any Satisfaction at all. But the meaning is, when we ſay, the *Juſtice* of God *neceſſarily* called for Puniſhment, that it was very *Fit*, very *right*, very *reaſonable*, and in the Wiſdom of Government, really *neceſſary*, that the pernicious and deſtructive Nature of Sin, ſhould be made apparent; that *His* indignation againſt it, who is of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity, ſhould be fully manifeſted; and that the Honour and Dignity of the eternal Laws of his righteous Government ſhould be ſupported and vindicated, the Greatneſs and Weight of his Commands preſerved, and the neceſſity of Holineſs and true Virtue evidenced. Now *This End*, the Wiſdom of God accompliſhed even *more effectually* by the Death of his Son, than it would have been even by the Deſtruction of the Offender himſelf. For ſince God *would* not paſs over the Sins of Men, without ſo great a perſon's ſuffering in the Nature of Man; that is, ſince he *did not* think any *other* method ſo *proper* of declaring his mercy and compaſſion towards Sinners, as that of ſo ſingular and extraordinary a Diſpenſation; This ſhows, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt affecting manner, the greatneſs of his Indignation againſt Sin, and his real Concern to preſerve the Laws of everlaſting Righteouſneſs from being deſpiſed or lightly tranſgreſſed. Rather than this ſhould not be effectually taken care of, he permitted *his own Son* to become a Sacrifice for Sin: He *permitted* him, I ſay; (For one perſon cannot *juſtly* be appointed to ſuffer for another, but by his *own Conſent*:) He *permitted*, that *his own Son* ſhould, *for Sin, condemn Sin in the fleſh*, Rom. viii. 3. that is, ſhould himſelf by ſuffering in the Fleſh as a Sacrifice for Sin, become the great and ſtanding condemnation of Sin for ever; ſhould become an everlaſting example and demonſtration, how neceſſary the Wiſdom of God thought it in the government of the World, that Sin ſhould be ſeverely and exemplarily condemned. And This is the plain meaning of all thoſe phraſes of Scripture, wherein the Death of Chriſt is repreſented as our *redemption*, *ranſom*, or *purchaſe*; or his *buying* us *with a price*, and the like. His making *ſatisfaction* for us, was not by way of exact *equivalent*, which God was *bound* to accept; as in the caſe of one man's paying a debt for another: For in that caſe, no Acknowledgments are due to *him*, *to* whom the debt is paid, but to *him* only, who pays it; Neither could it with Truth have been affirmed, (as the Scripture always takes care to affirm with great earneſtneſs,) that God forgives mens Sins freely *and out of meer* grace and mercy, if *Satisfaction* were made for them in *That* ſenſe: But the plain meaning of Chriſt's making *Satisfaction* for us is, that God was pleaſed freely to appoint, and freely to accept, and, of his meer Grace and Mercy, to be *ſatisfied with* what Chriſt did and ſuffered, in vindication of the divine Juſtice, and of the Honour of God's Laws and Government, and for the manifeſting his irreconcileable Hatred againſt Sin.

2*dly*, The *ſecond* End or Deſign of the Goſpel; is to manifeſt at the ſame time, and in a conſiſtent manner, God's *Mercy and Compaſſion* towards Sinners. *Mercy*, is an Attribute as eſſential to the divine Nature, as Juſtice; and *its* proper Office, is to ſhow forth itſelf in all truly compaſſionable caſes. Man, tho' an actual Sinner by the corrupt Choice indeed of his *Will*, yet in his very *Nature* was frail and fallible, and liable to be deceived. His caſe therefore, was, upon That conſideration, a proper object of compaſſion: For God *knew whereof we were made, and remembred that we were but duſt*, Pſ. ciii. 14. That which in This caſe became infinite Wiſdom to do, was to extend mercy and compaſſion unto ſinful Man; and yet to do This in ſuch a manner, as might at the ſame time be perfectly conſiſtent with his unalterable Juſtice and Indignation againſt Sin. Now *This End* would not have been ſo completely anſwered, by God's making uſe of his abſolute Sovereignty and Supreme Authority *alone*, in the Forgiveneſs of Sin. But it was perfectly anſwered by the All-wiſe diſpenſation of the Goſpel, when God manifeſted his *Love* to the *World* by *ſending his only-begotten Son*, that *in* him *we* might *have redemption thro' his blood*, even *the forgiveneſs of Sins, according to the riches of his grace wherein he has abounded towards*

wards us in all Wiſdom and Prudence, Eph. i. 7, 8. Theſe laſt words, *in all Wiſdom and Prudence*, ſeem deſignedly added by the Apoſtle, to expreſs the wonderful Fitneſs of the Goſpel fully to anſwer the End I am now ſpeaking of. For nothing could poſſibly be a greater Inſtance and Aſſurance of God's Love and Compaſſion towards Men, than This ſending of his own Son for their Redemption; *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things*? Rom. viii. 32. And yet at the ſame time, in this diſpenſation, the heinouſneſs of Sin, and God's irreconcileable Anger againſt it, is ſet forth in the *ſtrongeſt* manner; in the very circumſtances of Mercy itſelf, even while he is pardoning and accepting of Sinners. So that we may juſtly ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Mercy and Truth*, (that is, *Mercy and Juſtice*) *are* here *met together*; *Righteouſneſs and Peace*, (that is, *Juſtice and Forgiveneſs*) *have kiſſed each other*. The only conſiderable difficulty in this matter is to conceive, how ſo *great* a Perſon as the *Son of God* ſhould condeſcend *ſo far*, in taking care of ſuch *mean* perſons as the *Sons of Men*. But This difficulty ariſes only from our Narrowneſs of Thought. For if 'tis not beneath the incomprehenſible Majeſty of *God himſelf* to inſpect, direct, and over-rule the Motions of every even the ſmalleſt particle of inanimate Matter in the Univerſe; as his Providence in the courſe of Nature demonſtrates that it is not; ſince not only not a ſparrow falls to the ground without our Father, but even the very Hairs of our head, (as our Saviour aſſures us,) are all numbred by him: I ſay, If 'tis not beneath the incomprehenſible Majeſty of God himſelf to inſpect, direct, and over-rule the Motions of every particle of inanimate Matter in the Univerſe, much leſs is it any Diſparagement to the Dignity of the Son *of God*, (tho' a very wonderful *condeſcenſion* indeed *it is*) to redeem the immortal Souls of Men.

3*dly*, The *third* End of the Goſpel, is to ſhow the abſolute Neceſſity of *Repentance* to Sinners, and of their effectual Amendment and Reformation: and the Impoſſibility of Pardon without it. That *men* cannot otherwiſe become happy, than by the Practice of Virtue; and that *Sinners* cannot become capable of Pardon, but by forſaking their Sins; is evident both from what we know by Reaſon, concerning the nature of God, of Men, and of Things; and from all former Revelations of the divine Will. But by the *Goſpel*, the Wiſdom of God has in a more illuſtrious manner, and with *greater Weight* of Arguments, ſet forth the indiſpenſible neceſſity of *Repentance* and *Amendment*, and the impoſſibility of obtaining Pardon *without* it; when even *with* it, he did not think fit to manifeſt his mercy to Sinners directly, but through the Interceſſion of Chriſt, and by the merits of his Death; Appointing that the *Manner* of accepting even *Repentance itſelf*, ſhould be through the Mediation of his beloved Son, by men's being *baptized into his Death*, and *waſhing their robes in the blood of the Lamb*: In *This very* Diſpenſation of mercy, *revealing* more *expreſly* his *wrath from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of Men*; and commanding us in the ſtricteſt manner, to walk worthy of ſo great a vocation, behaving ourſelves exemplarily, as children of the Day and of Light, in all Holineſs and godly Converſation: For that, whereas *God winked at the former times of ignorance, he now* peremptorily *commands all men every-where to repent, becauſe he has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs*: (Acts xvii. 30.) and *if judgment muſt* begin *at the houſe of God, what will the End be of them that obey not the Goſpel*? This is the ſtrongeſt reproof in the World to all the vain Contrivances, by which wicked men deceive themſelves; by Pilgrimages and Abſtinences, by Purifications and Oblations, by the Merits of Saints, by Death-bed Sacraments, by the Abſolutions of the Prieſt, or Any other means of reconciliation whatſoever, beſides that One *of cleanſing themſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God*.

4*thly*, The *fourth* and *laſt* End or Deſign of the Goſpel, is to give to ſuch as are truly Penitent *a full Aſſurance of Hope*, that they *ſhall be* Objects of the divine Mercy and to inſtruct and aſſiſt them in their duty accordingly. And *This End*, the Goſpel has anſwered in the wiſeſt and moſt perfect manner. For though there was indeed, even under the Light of *Nature*, very *good* ground of *Hope*, that God *would* accept the Repentance of Sinners; yet 'tis a ſtrong *additional*

SERM. XIII.

ditional aſſurance, which the divine Wiſdom has now vouchſafed us, in *not ſparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all.* This is *indeed* an *effectual* encouragement to all ſincere Penitents, to All who have *really* forſaken every vicious courſe; to *draw near* and apply themſelves to the Throne of grace *with a true heart, in full aſſurance of Faith*; having *boldneſs and acceſs with confidence*, to *enter into the Holieſt by the blood of Jeſus, by a new and living way which he has conſecrated for us.* And the more; becauſe he has *not only* opened unto us the Temple in Heaven by his Blood, but *continues conſtantly* to *make interceſſion for us*, to be our *Advocate with the Father*, and a perpetual *High-Prieſt* for us *over the houſe of God:* And, that we might live worthy of theſe great privileges, hath himſelf *left us an Example* of all Holineſs and Purity, *that we ſhould follow his Steps:* And, that we might not want *Motives* to engage us to imitate him, has made to us a clear and diſtinct Diſcovery of a Judgment to come. And, becauſe it was Wiſe and Fit, that That doctrine which was to be an *univerſal* Law and Rule of Life, which was to be the condition of Salvation to perſons of *all* capacities, ſhould be very eaſy and intelligible to *All*; therefore he has delivered it to us with all Plainneſs and Simplicity, not in the abſtruſe *words of Man's Wiſdom*, (not in Terms hard to be underſtood, ſuch as are Thoſe wherewith Later Ages have corrupted his Doctrine; (*but in demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power*, 1 Cor. ii. 4. *Teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World*, in expectation of being judged according to our works. And he is to be *himſelf* our Judge; who, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Prieſt*, has *himſelf* firſt *ſuffered in all things like his brethren*; and *can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, having himſelf been *in all points tempted like as we are*; and *can have compaſſion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himſelf alſo had been compaſſed with infirmity.*

Heb. x. 22. Rom. v. 1, 2. Eph. iii. 12. Heb. x. 19. Heb. vii. 25. 1 Joh. ii. 1. Heb. x. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 21. Heb. ii. 17. iv. 15. & v. 2.

Theſe are ſome of the principal *Ends* and Deſigns of the Goſpel. On account of the *Excellency* of which *Ends*, and the wonderful *Fitneſs* of the reſpective *Means*, made uſe of by the divine Wiſdom in the manner I have now diſcourſed of, to accompliſh them; Chriſt is called, (in 1 *Cor.* i. 24. *and* 30.) *the* Wiſdom *of God*; and in the *Text*, Col. ii. 3. it is expreſſed, that in him *are hid all the Treaſures of* Wiſdom; and *Eph.* i. 8. that, by this diſpenſation, the Grace of God has *abounded towards us, in all* Wiſdom and Prudence; and *Phil.* iii. 8. that *all* other *things* are to be *accounted as Loſs, for the* Excellency of the Knowledge *of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* This is the *firſt* mark of Wiſdom; the *Excellency of the Ends propoſed*, and the *Fitneſs of the reſpective Means* to accompliſh them.

The *next* circumſtance wherein the Wiſdom of God has particularly ſhown forth itſelf in the accompliſhing of the fore-mentioned Ends, is; that the Incarnation of Chriſt, as, *after* it was revealed, it appeared to be plainly in all reſpects the *fitteſt* poſſible Means; ſo, *before* it was revealed, it was on the contrary ſuch an *unexpected* Method, and ſo *undiſcoverable* by any *finite* Wiſdom, as to be an inſcrutable Myſtery, not only to *Men*, (upon which account St. *Paul* calls it in the words before the Text, *the* Myſtery of *God, even the Father, and of Chriſt*; and in 1 *Cor.* ii. 7. *the wiſdom of God in a* myſtery, *even the* hidden *wiſdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew*; and *Col.* i. 26. *the* myſtery *which hath been* hid *from ages and from generations, but now is made manifeſt to his Saints*;) but it was moreover a myſtery which even the *Angels* alſo *deſired to look into*, 1 Pet. i. 12. and ſuch an inſtance of *Wiſdom, Eph.* iii. 9, 10. that thereby not only all Men may *ſee, what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt*; but even to the higheſt Angels alſo, *to the principalities and Powers in heavenly places, may be known by the Church the manifold Wiſdom of God.*

The *laſt* circumſtance I ſhall take notice of, wherein the Wiſdom of God has remarkably manifeſted itſelf in the Goſpel, is his cauſing it to prevail in the World by unlikely inſtruments, by the preaching of mean and unlearned perſons, in oppoſition to all the human Power and Wiſdom of the World. The *Jews*, fond of eſtabliſhing their own righteouſneſs, oppoſed with all their Might *the*

righteouſneſs

SERM. XIII.

righteouſneſs of God; that is, That new doctrine, that new method of Religion and Righteouſneſs which God eſtabliſhed in the Goſpel. The *Gentiles*, conceited of *their own human Wiſdom and Philoſophy*, oppoſed with all their Learning and artfulneſs of diſpute the *divine Wiſdom manifeſted in the ſame doctrine of Chriſt*. Againſt *Both* theſe Oppoſers at once, a few mean and unlearned Perſons were wonderfully inabled to prevail. And the Wiſdom of God in cauſing them ſo to do, in *deſtroying the Wiſdom of the Wiſe, and bringing to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent*, is moſt elegantly deſcribed by St. *Paul*, in 1 *Cor.* i. 21, *After that, in the Wiſdom of God, the World by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the fooliſhneſs of preaching to ſave them that believe. For the Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks ſeek after Wiſdom; But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the Power of God, and the Wiſdom of God: For — God hath choſen the fooliſh Things of the World to confound the wiſe, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; — That no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence.* And in the 11th to the *Rom.* ver. 30, he illuſtrates and ſtrengthens the ſame Argument ſtill further, by obſerving another and more *particular* inſtance of Wiſdom, in God's ſo diſpoſing *this whole matter*, as that the Unbelief of the *Jews* at firſt, and the Converting of the *Gentiles*, would finally terminate in the more illuſtrious Reducing of the *Jews* likewiſe, and the Salvation of *Both: For as ye*, ſaith he, ye *Gentiles, in times paſt have not believed God, yet now have obtained mercy through Their* [the *Jews*] *unbelief; Even ſo have Theſe alſo* [the *Jews*] *now not believed, that through your* [the *Gentiles*] *mercy, They alſo may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them All in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon All: O the depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!*

III. The *Uſes* we are to make of this *Whole* Diſcourſe, concerning the Wiſdom of God conſidered either in general, or as more particularly manifeſted in his Works, his Government, and in his Laws; are briefly ſuch as follow. *That* from hence we confute the Folly of *Atheiſts*, by ſhowing them that the *more* the Works of God are ſtudied, the *more* marks of Wiſdom are continually diſcovered in them. *That* we who are *already* convinced of this truth, be continually *praiſing* God for all his works of Wiſdom; *who by his excellent Wiſdom made the Heavens, for his mercy endureth for ever; and ſtretched out the Earth above the Waters*, Pſ. cxxxvi. 5. &c. and particularly for his works ſeen in *ourſelves*; whether with regard to our *bodies*, Pſ. cxxxix. 14. *I will praiſe thee, for I am wonderfully made*; or with reſpect to the Faculties of our *Minds*, for his having *taught us more than the Beaſts of the Earth, and made us Wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven*, Job xxxv. 11. *That* tho' the Inſtances of Wiſdom we *can* diſcover, are numberleſs; yet we are not to wonder, if we *cannot* find out *All* the ways of *infinite* wiſdom, nor comprehend *All* the ſecrets of Providence: For, *canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea*, Job. xi. 7. This Excellent man *Job himſelf*, who once thought he could underſtand the ways of God, and argue with him, yet confeſſed afterwards, ch. xlii. 5, 6. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the Ear, but Now mine Eyes ſee thee; wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in Duſt and Aſhes. That* therefore it becomes *Us* to apply ourſelves to our *own* plain Duty, and leave *Secret things* to the Lord our God; conſidering, whenever the Difficulties of Providence are greater than we can explain, that if the well-laid Deſigns of a Wiſe and potent Prince, cannot by the firſt Scene of Action poſſibly be diſcovered; much more may it be impoſſible for *Us*, from our very ſhort view of a few events of Providence, to be able to explain the Deſigns of the Supreme and All-wiſe Governour of the World; which yet in the End, (when we know the *whole*,) ſhall appear moſt evidently Wiſe and Excellent: *Seek not out the things that are too hard for thee, neither ſearch the things that are above thy ſtrength: But what is commanded thee, think thereupon with reverence; for it is not needful for thee to ſee with thine eyes, the things that are in ſecret*, &c. *Eccluſ.* iii 21. For the ſame reaſon, we are, in all *afflictions*, chearfully to *ſubmit* to him; conſidering that the Divine Wiſdom knows infinitely better what is

Deut. xxix. 29.

Eccleſ. ii. *tot.* Nos cæcâ magnaq; cupidine fit ducti, &c.

SERM. XIII.

fit for us, than we can judge for ourſelves; and is able to find out unexpected means of deliverance for us, when he pleaſes; and make *all things work together for good* to them that love and fear him. And in all *Exigencies*, where there appear no viſible means of eſcape, yet we may depend on him without anxious ſollicitude; conſidering, that He whoſe Providence attends even to the minuteſt things; who feeds the Fowls of the Air, and clothes the Lilies of the Field; without whom not a ſparrow falls to the ground, or a hair of our head periſhes; will certainly much more take care of *Us*: And that no counſel can take place, and no device can ſtand, how deeply or wiſely ſoever it may ſeem to be laid to human Underſtanding, if it be not agreeable to his All-wiſe Will: For even *the Fooliſhneſs of God*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, 1 *Cor.* i. 25. that is, thoſe things which to *Us* ſeem the moſt improbable, and wherein God makes uſe of the moſt *unlikely* means and inſtruments; even *This is wiſer than men; and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men.* Laſtly, If *God* is infinitely and Only wiſe, let *Us* in *Our* proportion *ſeek* true Wiſdom, by *Imitation of* him, and by *Obedience to* his Commands. *Prov.* ii. 3, &c. *If thou cry after knowledge, and lift up thy voice for underſtanding; if thou ſeek her as Silver, and ſearch for her as hid Treaſure; Then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God: For the Lord giveth Wiſdom, out of his mouth cometh Knowledge and Underſtanding: He layeth up ſound Wiſdom for the righteous, he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly; He keepeth the Paths of judgment, and preſerveth the way of his Saints; Then ſhalt thou underſtand righteouſneſs and judgment and equity, yea every good path.*

Jam. i. 5.
Job xxviii. 28.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

Of the GOODNESS of GOD.

PSAL. cxlv. 9.

The Lord is Good to All; and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.

THO' *every one* of the Divine Perfections in *particular*, affords moſt juſt ground of Adoration and Honour; yet That which to *Us* completes the Idea of God, and repreſents him under the Notion of the *Father* as well as *Lord* of the Univerſe, and makes the Supreme Being and Governour of all things, to be no leſs the Object of our *Hope and Love*, than of our *Admiration and Fear*, is This *glorious* Attribute, of *Goodneſs*. Eternity and Immenſity *amaze* our Thoughts: infinite Knowledge and Wiſdom fill us with *Admiration:* Omnipotence or irreſiſtible Power is *great and adorable*; but at the ſame time, if conſidered ſingly by itſelf, 'tis alſo *dreadful and terrible:* Dominion and Majeſty clothed with perfect and impartial *Juſtice*, is worthy of the *Higheſt Praiſes*; but ſtill to *Sinners* it appears rather *awful and venerable*, than the Object of Deſire and Love: *Holineſs and Purity* are inexpreſſibly beautiful and amiable Perfections; but of too bright a Glory for *Sinners* to contemplate with Delight. 'Tis *Goodneſs* that *finiſhes* the Idea of God; and repreſents him to us under that *lovely* Character of being the *Beſt*, as well as the *Greateſt*, Being in the Univerſe. *This* is That Attribute, which both *in itſelf* is infinitely amiable, and, as a ground-work interwoven with all the *Other* Perfections of the divine Nature, makes every one of *Them* alſo to become Objects of our *Love* as well as of our Adoration. Immenſe and Eternal Goodneſs, Goodneſs All-powerful and All-wiſe, Goodneſs inveſted with Supreme Dominion, and tempering the rigour of unrelenting Juſtice; This is *indeed* a Deſcription of a *Perfect* Being; a Character, *truly worthy* of God. This is That inexhauſtible Fountain of Beneficence, from which the *whole Frame of Nature* derives its Being;

SERM. XIV.

Being; by which *all Creatures* in the Univerſe are continually ſupported and preſerved; from which *Man* derives his *preſent* Enjoyments, and his *future* Hopes; which *Angels*, and Archangels, and the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, adore with never-ceaſing Praiſes in the regions of eternal Happineſs; and of which *our Saviour himſelf*, who, having been in the Boſom of his Father, knew infinitely better than All Theſe what was his True and Eſſential Nature, affirms by way of Eminence and High Diſtinction, that *there is None Good, but One, that is God.* The Pſalmiſt deſcribes this Attribute elegantly in the words of the Text; *The Lord is Good to All, and his tender Mercies are over All his Works.*

In the following Diſcourſe upon which words, I ſhall *1ſt*, endeavour to ſhow briefly *in general*, What *Goodneſs* is: *2dly*, I ſhall prove that *God is* and *cannot but be Good*, according to this *general* Notion of Goodneſs: *3dly*, I ſhall endeavour to ſet forth diſtinctly in *what particular* Inſtances the divine Goodneſs has more peculiarly diſplayed itſelf: *4thly*, I ſhall conſider the *Difficulties* or *Objections* which may be raiſed againſt this important doctrine, which is the Foundation of true Religion, and the great Guard againſt Superſtition: And *Laſtly* I ſhall draw ſome uſeful *Inferences* from the Whole.

In the *1ſt* place, 'tis neceſſary to ſhow briefly *in general*, What *Goodneſs* is. For unleſs we clearly and diſtinctly underſtand *what* Goodneſs *is*, 'tis evident we mean *nothing*, when we ſay *God is Good*; and conſequently cannot be certain whether we *honour* him, or *diſhonour* him, in giving him an unknown Character. Nothing therefore can be more abſurd than the doctrine which has ſometimes been advanced; that *Goodneſs* in *God* is not the ſame thing as Goodneſs in *Men*; but ſomething altogether tranſcendent, and which we underſtand not. This, I ſay, is highly abſurd: Becauſe, if This were the caſe, it would plainly follow, that when we affirm God to be *Good*, we ſhould only affirm *we know not what*; that is, in reality we ſhould affirm *nothing at all.* There *is* indeed *This* difference; that Goodneſs in *Men*, even in the *Beſt* of men, is *ſhort and imperfect*, *frail* and *mutable*, *unſteady* and always *mixt* more or leſs with Evil; and even in *Angels* and *Archangels* themſelves, 'tis *finite* and *deficient*; whereas in *God* alone, it is *eſſential* and *perfect.* But ſtill the *Thing itſelf* is every where *the ſame.* Goodneſs is every where of the ſame *Nature*, tho' not in the ſame *proportion*; and in All Beings whatſoever, in whom it is found at all, it is the ſame in *Kind*, tho' not in *Degree.* If Goodneſs in *God*, were (as Some have imagined,) we know not what; how could we be commanded to *imitate*, what we do not underſtand? or how ſhould any man know, whether he were likely to fare the *better* or the *worſe*, by means of That which he knows not what it is? What *Comfort* can any man draw from the conſideration of the Divine *Goodneſs*, if he means thereby only he knows not what; any thing that Power, any thing that Dominion, any thing that Sovereignty can do, whether it be Beneficent or not? The True Notion therefore of the Goodneſs of *God* muſt be learnt by conſidering what Goodneſs is in *Men*; And by adding to the Idea of a good *Man*, boundleſs *Perfection* in the *Degree* of thoſe Qualifications which denominate him ſuch, we arrive at the neareſt Conception that 'tis poſſible for Us to frame, of the *Divine Goodneſs.* Thus our Saviour himſelf teaches us to argue; St. *Matt.* vii. 11, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your children; how much more ſhall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask him.* Now *Goodneſs* in *Men* ſignifies a *Benevolent Diſpoſition*; a Diſpoſition to do good to others, even more extenſively, and with greater Benignity, than is required by That Virtue which we call *Juſtice*, or *Righteouſneſs.* According to That accurate Diſtinction of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* v. 7, *For a righteous* [or Juſt] *man, ſcarcely will one die; yet peradventure for a* Good *man, ſome would even dare to die. Righteouſneſs*, or *Juſtice*, is doing all that Good to Others, which *They* have any Claim of *Right* to demand; But *Goodneſs* is, further, doing them All that Good, which, whether *They* have any Right to expect or not, is in any wiſe *fit*, or *reaſonable*, for *Us* to beſtow. Thus therefore the *Goodneſs of* God is That *Beneficent* Diſpoſition of the divine Nature, which moves him to diffuſe upon All his Creatures, thro' the Immenſe Univerſe, and thro' a Boundleſs Eternity, every good thing that is *proper* for them, every thing that tends to their *True* Happineſs, every good which either *They* are in their own

own Nature *capable* of *receiving*, or which for *Him*, in his All-wiſe Government of the Whole, is *fit and reaſonable* to *give*. SERM. XIV.

And from hence, by the way, 'tis evident demonſtrably, that there *is* not, there *cannot be* any ſuch thing, as *abſolute and unconditionate Reprobation*. For, This being a matter wholly contradictory to all our Notions of Goodneſs; if abſolute and irreſiſtible *Sovereignty* could ſuffice (as ſome Sects of men have imagined) to make ſuch a thing become *Good*, it would follow that the word, *Goodneſs*, had no ſignification at all; and conſequently, that it was neither *in itſelf* of any importance, nor of any conſequence to *Us*, whether the Almighty God was Good or no. Than which, nothing can be affirmed more *unworthy* of the Creator of all things; or be more deſervedly reckoned among thoſe *hard Speeches*, which if not *unrighteous*, yet at leaſt raſh *inconſiderate* men, *have ſpoken againſt him*. Jud. 15.

2*dly*, Having thus therefore briefly explained in general *What* Goodneſs is, it will now be eaſy in the 2*d* place to prove, that *God* actually *is and cannot but be Good*, according to this *general* Notion of Goodneſs. For, Goodneſs being nothing elſe but a fixt Diſpoſition to do always what in the Whole is *Beſt*, and (ſo far as is conſiſtent with *Right* and *Juſtice*) what is *moſt beneficial* to All; 'tis evident that the Supreme Being, having all *Knowledge*, ſo that his *Underſtanding* can never *err* in *judging* what is Beſt; and having *no Want* of any thing to complete his *own Happineſs*, ſo that his *Will* can never be influenced by any *wrong Affection*, or have any poſſible *Temptation* laid before it to act otherwiſe than according to what he knows is Beſt; 'tis from hence, I ſay, very evident to Reaſon, that the Supreme Cauſe, being thus neceſſarily Happy in the eternal enjoyment of his own infinite Perfections, and altogether incapable of being tempted with Evil, could not poſſibly have any other Motives to make any Creatures at all, but only that he might communicate to them his own Perfections, Goodneſs and Happineſs; according to *their different* Capacities, ariſing from that *Variety of Natures*, which 'twas fit for *infinite Wiſdom* to produce; and according to *their different* Improvements, *and Deſerts*, ariſing from that *Liberty*, which is eſſentially Neceſſary to the Conſtitution of *Intelligent and Active Beings*. God therefore is *Neceſſarily* and *Eſſentially Good*. And yet, even *This neceſſity* ariſing wholly from the unalterable Rectitude of his *Will*, (whereas his *natural* Attributes, ſuch as Knowledge and Power, ariſe immediately from abſolute *Neceſſity of Nature*;) there is therefore *This difference*, that, whilſt for his *Power*, *Knowledge*, and the like, we can only *admire and adore* him, for his *Goodneſs* we return him moreover *Praiſe and Thanks*. For which reaſon, the Scripture not only conſtantly confirms, what natural Reaſon teaches us, that God *is* Good; but repreſents it alſo as the Attribute wherein he chiefly *delights*; and deſcribes it always in the tendereſt and moſt affectionate expreſſions. *Like as a* Father *pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him*, Pſ. ciii. 13. *I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, judgment and righteouſneſs in the Earth; for in theſe things I* delight, *ſays the Lord*, Jer. ix. 24. and Iſ. xlix. 15, *Can a woman forget her ſucking-child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the Son of her womb? yea*, they may *forget, yet will I not forget thee*. In the ſecond *commandment*, when God had threatned *judgments* to the *third and fourth* generation of them that *hate* him; To ſhow how much *more* he delights in *rewarding* than in *puniſhing*, he promiſes *mercy* unto *Thouſands* of them that *love* him and keep his commandments. And 'tis not without a very *ſignificant and expreſſive emphaſis*, that our Saviour ſo remarkably affirms, St. *Mar.* x. 18. *There is none Good, but One, that is God*. But This *in general*.

3*dly*, I propoſed in the 3*d* place to ſet forth diſtinctly, in what *particular Inſtances* the Divine Goodneſs has more peculiarly diſplayed itſelf. And here, to go through all the works, of Creation, Providence, and Redemption, is a Subject which the Tongues of Men and Angels ſhall never be able to exhauſt. For the Goodneſs of God is *boundleſs* as his univerſal Works, and *endleſs* as the Ages of Eternity. *Who can expreſs the noble acts of the Lord, or ſhow forth all his Praiſe?* Pſ. cvi. 2. By the *Goodneſs* of God, was that incomprehenſible Variety of Creatures brought into *Being*, which of themſelves would never have exiſted: And a *further* Mark of the *Fountain* from which they all proceed, is that Character given things upon their firſt production, that God beheld every thing which he had made, and, in their reſpective kinds and degrees, they were

SERM. XIV.

Pſ. cxlv. 15 cxlvii. 9.

each of them *very Good*. By the ſame *Goodneſs*, is ſuitable Proviſion made for the *Preſervation* of all things, for their proper *Continuance* and *Well-being*: *Pſ.* civ. 27, They *all wait upon Thee, that thou mayeſt give them their meat in due ſeaſon; Thou openeſt thine hand, and ſatisfieſt the deſire of every living Thing; He maketh the graſs to grow upon the mountains, and giveth to the beaſt his food, and to the young ravens which cry unto him.* And *Mat.* vi. 26, *The fowls of the Air*, ſaith our Saviour, *neither ſow, nor reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. And the lillies of the field toil not, neither do they ſpin; and yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of Them*: Like *one* of *Them*, whom *Nature* has adorned with what *no Art* can expreſs, and clothed them with *inimitable* Beauty. In *Man* ſtill *more particularly* has the *Goodneſs of* God appeared, in giving him ſo excellent and noble a Being: *Thou madeſt him a little lower than the Angels, and crownedſt him with glory and honour; Thou madeſt him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, and haſt put all things in ſubjection under his Feet*, Pſ. viii. 5. He has indued us with *Reaſon*, *Underſtanding*, and *Knowledge*, not only ſufficient to preſerve our Dominion over the *Creation*; but ſuch as moreover inables us to contemplate, to adore, and to imitate, our great *Creator himſelf*. The Apoſtle alledges this as a particular inſtance of the divine Goodneſs, *Jam.* i. 17, 5. *Every Good and every perfect Gift* (that is, every *perfection* of our nature, and eſpecially every *religious qualification*,) *is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, ----- who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.* In the *whole courſe* of our lives, his *Goodneſs* prevents numberleſs Evils from falling upon us; which, with all our Reaſon and Underſtanding, we could by no means either prevent or avoid. And under *actual* Evils, which the Wiſdom of his unerring Providence thinks fit *not* to prevent, he relieves and comforts, and ſupports men under them; And frequently affords a Remedy, by *Temporal* Deliverances: Or if he ſees *That* not fit, yet (which is a much *greater* Inſtance and Exerciſe of Goodneſs) he always makes proviſion for mens *eternal Happineſs*, if by their own Perverſeneſs they neglect not the Means which he has afforded them for That End. He has endued them with *Reaſon* and *natural Conſcience*, to diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil; and to forewarn them, as it were by an inward and perpetual Inſtinct, of the certainty of a future Judgment. He has *confirmed* this natural Conſcience with the additional Help of an expreſs *Revelation*; and has declared, that according to the ſeveral *Degrees* of mens Knowledge in theſe matters, he will require of them a ſeverer, or leſs ſevere Account, in ſuch manner as becomes the Judge of the whole Earth to do right. And in the mean time, that Sinners may, if poſſible, be brought to Repentance; he, with much long-ſuffering and forbearance, defers their Puniſhment; and, if they *do* repent, he forgives and pardons them, as a *Father* receives a returning Child; nay, even as a *Shepherd* rejoyces over a Sheep that had been loſt. And This is That *Part* of *Goodneſs*, which is ſtrictly and properly diſtinguiſhed by the Name of *Mercy*. God being our Creator and Supreme Governour, and it being our neceſſary and moſt reaſonable Duty to obey at all times his Laws in every particular; 'tis plain that every wilful Tranſgreſſion juſtly deſerves Puniſhment; And *after* ſuch Tranſgreſſion, our beſt Obedience being nothing more than was our Duty *before* it, 'tis evident that in ſtrict *Juſtice* God is not obliged, in conſideration of what is *to come*, to forgive what is *paſt*: In *ſtrictneſs of Juſtice*, I ſay, God was under *no* obligation to pardon Sinners upon their Repentance; but his Goodneſs *only* moved him to have compaſſion upon them; And the *Effect* of That compaſſion, was the Coming of Chriſt. It has ſometimes been apprehended otherwiſe, that the interpoſition of Chriſt was the *Cauſe* of God's mercy and compaſſion towards Sinners: But the *Scripture* always repreſents this matter the *other* way, more to the Honour and Exaltation of the divine Goodneſs; that 'twas the *original Mercy* and free Compaſſion of God, which moved him to *ſend* his Son to mediate on our behalf. Thus our Saviour himſelf expreſſes it, *Joh.* iii. 16, *God ſo* loved *the world, that he* gave *his only-begotten Son*: He does not ſay, *the only-begotten Son prevailed with God to love the world*; but, the *Love and Compaſſion* of God towards his Creatures, prevailed with him to *ſend* his *Son* into the world. *God*, of his own original eternal eſſential Goodneſs, *ſo* loved *the world, that*, in pity towards

towards fallen Mankind he appointed This *method* of recovery, and gave *his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Thus alſo St. *Paul*; *God*, ſaith he, (that is, *God the Father,*) *commendeth his* Love *towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners, Chriſt died for us*, Rom. v. 8. And St. *John*, in his firſt epiſtle, ch. iv. 8, 9. *God*, ſaith he, *is Love*; and *In This was manifeſted the Love of God towards us, becauſe that God* ſent *his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* SERM. XIV.

Theſe declarations of Scripture are ſo expreſs, that they ſeem intended on *purpoſe* to prevent all poſſibility of Miſtake in this Matter. And thoſe men (of whatſoever Sect they be) who ſpeak otherwiſe, ſpeak not honourably enough of the divine Goodneſs, while they repreſent the Supreme Majeſty of Heaven as an Object of *Fear and Dread* only, and not of *Love*; Inveſting him, in the conceptions they frame of him, with Dominion, and Power, and the Terrors of unrelenting Juſtice, but not ſufficiently attending to his eſſential *Goodneſs*; which is the Attribute wherein he chiefly delights; and which he always exerciſes, *ſo far* as is conſiſtent with Juſtice and Wiſdom and good Government; and *of* which, the ſending a Perſon of ſuch Dignity as his only-begotten Son, to reconcile Sinners to Himſelf conſiſtently with Juſtice, by his exemplary Humiliation, by his Life and Doctrine, by his Sufferings and Death, by his Exaltation and Interceſſion for us; of the *Goodneſs*, I ſay, of *God the Supreme Father and Lord of all*, This is an unparalleled and everlaſting Inſtance.

But 4*thly*, Againſt this *whole* Notion of the divine Goodneſs, there are *two* very great *Objections*, which deſerve diſtinctly to be conſidered; Namely, the *Evils* which God *permits* to happen in the *preſent* Life, and the *Puniſhments* which he *inflicts* in that which is *to come*.

As to the *Evils* which happen in the *preſent* Life; the antient *Perſian* Philoſophers (and after Them the *Manichees* in later Ages) fancied, that there was an infinite *Evil* Principle, independent *upon*, and oppoſite *to*, the infinite *Good* one. Againſt Theſe, *Eſaias* declares, in his prophecy to *Cyrus* King of *Perſia*, Iſ. xlv. 7, I *form the Light and create Darkneſs*, I *make Peace, and create Evil*; I *the Lord do all theſe things*. The meaning is: There is no *Evil* happens in the world, but what for wiſe ends is permitted by the Providence of the One infinitely *Good* God.

To inſtance in particulars. *All* that we call *Evil* in the preſent Life, is either merely an *Evil of Imperfection*, ſuch as the Want *of certain Faculties and Excellencies which other Creatures enjoy*; Or *Natural Evil*, ſuch as *Pain, Death*, and the like; Or *Moral Evil*, ſuch as are all kinds of *Debauchery, Sin, and Vice*. The *Firſt* of Theſe, *viz.* mere *Imperfection*, is not properly an *Evil*. For every Power, Faculty, or Perfection, which Any Creature enjoys, being the *Free* Gift of God, which he was no more obliged to beſtow, than he was to confer Being or Exiſtence itſelf; 'tis plain, the mere *Want* of any certain Faculty or Perfection in Any kind of Creatures, which *Never* belonged to their Nature, is no more an *Evil* to *Them*, than their never having been created, or brought into Being at all, could properly have been called an *Evil*. The *Second* kind of Evil, which we commonly call *Natural Evil*, is either a neceſſary Conſequence of the Former; as *Death*, to a Creature on whoſe Nature Immortality was never conferred; And then 'tis no more properly an *Evil*, than the Former: Or elſe 'tis balanced in the whole, with as great or greater Good; as the *Afflictions and Sufferings of good men*; And *Then alſo* 'tis not properly an Evil: Or elſe, laſtly, 'tis a *Puniſhment*; And then 'tis a neceſſary conſequent of the *Third* and laſt ſort of Evil, *viz. Moral Evil*, which is *Debauchery, Sin, and Vice*. And This ariſes wholly from the Abuſe of that *Liberty*, which God gave to his Creatures for the moſt excellent Purpoſes; and which 'twas *reaſonable and fit and neceſſary* to give them for the Perfection and Order of the whole Creation: But they Themſelves, contrary to God's intention and command, have abuſed what was *neceſſary* for the Perfection of the *whole*, to the corruption and depravation of *Themſelves*; And thus all ſorts of *Evils* have entered into the world, without any diminution to the infinite *Goodneſs* of the Creator and Governor thereof.

As

SERM. XIV.

As to the *Puniſhments* which God will inflict *in the Life to come*: Since all men acknowledge proportionable Puniſhments to be *neceſſary* in all *Governments whatſoever*; and ſince the Kingdom and Government of *God* over the whole Univerſe, continues in the *future* ſtate as well as in the *preſent*; 'tis plain we can have no juſt reaſon to preſume, that the Puniſhments of incorrigible Sinners will be leſs uſeful to the Ends and Reaſons of God's infinite Government *There*, than they are neceſſary in the Wiſdom of his Providence *here*. Nor can the Goodneſs of God be more obliged to preſerve wilful men from *perdition hereafter*, than he is bound to preſerve the careleſs from a *Precipice at preſent*. The exact *Nature and Manner* indeed of the future Puniſhment of the Wicked, any further than is in general neceſſary to deter us from Sin, is not diſtinctly revealed to us. But concerning it there are *two* things moſt clearly declared in Scripture, abundantly ſufficient to vindicate the Divine Goodneſs. *Firſt*, that the *Degrees* of Puniſhment in that final and eternal ſtate, ſhall be exactly proportionate to the Degree of mens Demerits; and even Damnation itſelf ſhall by the righteous Judge be inflicted in weight and meaſure. And *Secondly*, that the *Puniſhment itſelf*, abſolutely ſpeaking, ſhall at the day of judgment, in the nature and reaſon of the thing, appear ſo juſt and neceſſary, that *every mouth*, even of *Sinners* themſelves, *ſhall be ſtopped before God*; ſtopped, not by Force and Power, but by the clear evidence of Right and Reaſon. And God, when he *cometh with ten thouſand of his Saints to execute judgment upon All*, ſhall convince *ungodly Sinners*, not only of their *ungodly deeds* which they have committed, but of their *hard ſpeeches* alſo which they have *ſpoken againſt him*, Jude 15. And when the Puniſhment of the wicked ſhall be *actually* inflicted upon them in the place of Torment, even *This* ſhall be, not only in the preſence of *God*, but in the preſence of the *Holy Angels* alſo, and in the preſence of *the Lamb*, Rev. xiv. 10. That is; it ſhall be ſuch as is, not only *appointed* by the *infinite Majeſty of God the righteous Judge of all*, but *approved* moreover by *Men* and *Angels*, and by *Him alſo himſelf, who loved us unto Death, even Chriſt our merciful and compaſſionate High-Prieſt*.

5*thly*, It remains in the 5*th* and *laſt* place, that I draw ſome *practical Inferences* from this whole Doctrine, concerning the Divine Goodneſs.

And 1*ſt*, The Goodneſs of God is a Ground of perpetual *Praiſe and Thankfulneſs*. Pſ. ciii. 2. *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits. Who forgiveth all thy Sin, and healeth all thy infirmities. Who ſaveth thy Life from deſtruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindneſs*.

2*dly*, If God is infinitely *Good*; this makes him the moſt perfect Object of our *Love*, as well as of our *Fear*. And tho' Obedience that proceeds from *Fear*, will be accepted to Salvation; yet when it proceeds from *Love*, it is more eaſy and pleaſant, more free from the danger of Superſtition, and from erroneous Circumſtances of all kinds.

3*dly*, A juſt Senſe of the *Goodneſs* of God is apt to raiſe in generous minds a very ſtrong hatred and indignation againſt Sin; when they conſider that 'tis an offence, not only of Indignity againſt their Supreme Governour, but of *Ingratitude* alſo againſt their Benefactor; Whoſe Commands are all given them, not for *his own* Sake, but for *theirs*; Not that their Obedience is of any Advantage to *Him*, but for *their own* Benefit only, and everlaſting Happineſs.

4*thly*, Though the *Goodneſs* of God be, like all his other Attributes, truly infinite; yet let no Sinners *preſume* upon it to their own deſtruction. For, infinite as it is, it extends not to *Devils*; it extends not to *impenitent Sinners*, it extends not to the *deſtruction of Juſtice and Virtue and good Government*: Even as infinite *Power* extends only to the *Objects of Power*, not to *Impoſſibilities*. God *loves* his Creatures, beyond the Love of the tendereſt and moſt compaſſionate Father; but ſtill always with this *one* exception, that he loves Virtue, Righteouſneſs, and Goodneſs, ſtill better than them. And againſt *no* ſort of Sinners does the Scripture ſpeak with greater *Indignation* or Severity, than againſt thoſe who preſumptuouſly make the *Goodneſs* of God an occaſion of ſinning, and turn even the *Grace* of God *itſelf* into Wantonneſs. *Deut.* xxix. 19, *If it come to paſs, when a man heareth the words of this curſe, that he bleſs himſelf in his heart, ſaying, I* ſhall *have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart: The Lord* will not *ſpare him, but the Anger*

of

SERM. XIV.

of the Lord ſhall ſmoke againſt that man, and all the Curſes that are written in this book ſhall lie upon him. And 'tis recorded in the book of *Kings* for an everlaſting memorial, that when God pardoned *Manaſſeh* upon his true Repentance after *many* years wickedneſs, and he reigned in *Jeruſalem fifty and five years*, his Son *Amon preſuming* upon the *Goodneſs* of God to imitate his Father's wickedneſs, was cut off in his Sin after only *two Years* reign.

5thly, The *Goodneſs* of God, is an *example* for *Us* to imitate. Does *He* who has *all Power* abſolutely in his own hands, *cauſe his Sun to ſhine on the Evil and on the Good, and ſend his rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt*, doing good to All, and extending his mercy over all his works? And ſhall frail *mortals*, ſhall vain and ſinful men, *tyrannize* over each other? Shall *God* forgive *us* freely ten thouſand talents? and ſhall *We* not forgive *each other* our one hundred pence? eſpecially when in our *daily* Prayer, our Lord has taught us to make This the expreſs condition of our own deſiring Forgiveneſs? And the *Reaſon* of the thing, is elegantly expreſſed by the *Son of Sirach*, Ecclus. xxviii. 3, 4. *One man beareth hatred againſt another, and doth he ſeek pardon from the Lord? He ſheweth no mercy to a man which is like himſelf, and doth he ask forgiveneſs of his own Sins?*

Laſtly, The conſideration of the *divine Goodneſs* is an incouragement to Repentance; ſeeing he requires of us no *impoſſible*, no *hard* condition; but only ſaith unto us, *Waſh and be clean*, Amend and be forgiven. Yet at the ſame time it ſhows alſo to Sinners the abſolute *Neceſſity* of their Reformation; ſeeing, *without* ſuch Reformation, even infinite Goodneſs itſelf *will not* pardon them, tho' it waits with much long-ſuffering for their Repentance and Amendment.

SERMON XV.

Of the PATIENCE of GOD.

ECCLES. viii. 11.

Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men, is fully ſet in them to do Evil.

SERM. XV.

CONCERNING the *Goodneſs* of God *in general*, I have diſcourſed already upon another occaſion: Concerning that *particular Branch* of Goodneſs, which conſiſts in deferring the Puniſhment of evil-doers, and is properly diſtinguiſhed by the Name of *Patience* or *Long-ſuffering*, I intend at this time to treat, from the words now read unto you. In which, it is obvious to obſerve; *1ſt*, the *Character*, or *Deſcription* given, of the divine *Patience and Long-ſuffering*; It conſiſts in *This*, that *Sentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily*. *2dly*, The *ill Uſe* that wicked and prophane Men are too apt to make of the divine forbearance; Their *Heart is* thereby *fully ſet in them to do evil*. *3dly*, The *Folly and Abſurdity* of thus abuſing the Patience of God; foraſmuch as *Sentence* againſt every evil work, tho' it be not *ſpeedily executed*, yet is *certainly paſſed*; and, if the Sinner amends not, will alſo *certainly be executed*; and That, the more *ſeverely* too, becauſe *not ſpeedily*.

I. Here is a *Character* or *Deſcription* given of the divine *Patience and Long-ſuffering*; It conſiſts in *This*, that *Sentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily*. The *Deſign* and *Reaſon* of which Delay is declared to us by St. *Paul*, *Rom.* ii. 4. *The Riches of the Goodneſs and Forbearance and Long-ſuffering* of God, which *leadeth thee to Repentance*; And St. *Peter*, *2 Pet.* iii. 9, 15. *The Lord is not ſlack concerning*

SERM. XV.

concerning his Promiſe, as ſome men count ſlackneſs, but is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that Any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance; —— *wherefore, beloved,* —— *account that the long-ſuffering of our Lord, is Salvation.* The *Reaſon* of God's delaying Puniſhment is to bring Men to *Repentance*; and to vindicate his Juſtice and *Goodneſs* in their deſtruction, if, after all his forbearance, they continue finally impenitent: *Rom.* ix. 22, *He endureth with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction*; fitted to deſtruction, by their own wickedneſs; and making that deſtruction *neceſſary* and inevitable, by their deſpiſing the Patience and Long-ſuffering of God. The incomprehenſible Majeſty of God ſtands in need of none of our Services, nor receives any Advantage from our Amendment and Return to him: yet he bears with us much more, than frail and paſſionate Men are willing to bear with men like themſelves, tho' their well-being entirely depends on the Services which they do each other. There is *no obligation* upon God in ſtrictneſs to ſpare Sinners at all; but, if he pleaſed, he might *with juſtice* cut them off immediately; and could *with eaſe* even out of the Stones of the Street raiſe up children unto *Abraham*; that is, create new and better creatures, who ſhould obey him in bringing forth the Fruits of Righteouſneſs: Yet, in great compaſſion, he chuſes rather to invite *Sinners* to Repentance; and with much unwillingneſs inflicts at laſt That Puniſhment, which their incorrigibleneſs makes *neceſſary* even for *Goodneſs* itſelf, in the adminiſtration of the ſupreme Government of the Univerſe, to inflict. *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, O Iſrael? how ſhall I make thee as Admah? how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together,* Hoſ. xi. 8. And Jer. ix. 7, *I will melt them and try them; for* how *ſhall I do for the daughter of my people?* Theſe are very eloquent and affectionate deſcriptions of what the Pſalmiſt declares in a direct and leſs figurative manner, *Pſ.* ciii. 8, *The Lord is full of Compaſſion, and Mercy, Long-ſuffering, and of great Goodneſs;* —— *He hath not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded us according to our Wickedneſſes;* —— *Like as a Father pitieth his own children, even ſo is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him; For he knoweth whereof we are made, he remembreth that we are but duſt.* And Pſ. lxxxi. 12. *My people would not hear my voice, and Iſrael would not obey me; So I gave them up into their own hearts luſts, and let them follow their own imaginations. O, that my people* would *have hearkned unto me; for if Iſrael had walked in my ways, I ſhould ſoon have put down their Enemies,* &c. The particular *Inſtances* which the Scripture gives us of this Patience and Forbearance of God towards Sinners, are very remarkable; and ſuch as may give us a *truer* Notion of this divine Attribute, than can be done by any verbal Deſcription. When God had threatned to *Adam*, that in the day he eat of the forbidden Fruit, he ſhould ſurely die; he did indeed accordingly, in that very day, become inevitably ſubject to Mortality; being from thenceforward excluded the Benefit of the Tree of Life. But the actual execution of That Sentence of Death was deferred for many years, that by Repentance and better Obedience for the future, he might eſcape the much ſeverer Puniſhment of Death eternal. When the whole world had corrupted themſelves in the days of *Noah*, and God reſolved to deſtroy them all with a Flood; yet St. *Peter* obſerves, 1 *Pet.* iii. 20. that *the Long-ſuffering of God* waited, *while the Ark was preparing*; in all which time, *Noah* was unto them a *Preacher of Righteouſneſs*, to have deterred them (if poſſible) from their diſobedience. After this, in the caſe of *Sodom and Gomorrha*, God ſent *Lot* into thoſe Cities, to be unto them a Teacher and an Example of Righteouſneſs: Whoſe righteous Soul when they had vexed day by day with their Impieties, and the Cry of their Wickedneſs was become exceeding great before God; yet, to ſet forth the Greatneſs of the Divine Patience, God repreſents himſelf to *Abraham*, as reſolving to reſpite the Deſtruction of thoſe Cities, if he could find even but *ten* righteous Perſons therein. The meaning of which is not that God will always ſpare a wicked Nation, whenever there ſhall be found therein a *certain determinate Number* of good men; but only to ſhow in general God's unwillingneſs to *deſtroy*, where-ever there appears Any *Hope*, or Foundation of Amendment. And becauſe theſe Cities, *when* deſtroyed, were ſet forth to *Us* as *an Example, ſuffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire*, that is, of That Fire which finally conſumed

SERM. XV.

conſumed them, ſo that they never were built again: therefore 'tis reaſonable to believe, that his Willingneſs to have ſaved them from That Deſtruction, was intended as a *Type*, to ſhow us how unwilling he is, that Sinners ſhould finally fall under That condemnation, of which the Fire of *Sodom* is ſet forth as a Reſemblance. In following Ages: When the ſeven Nations of *Canaan* were to be diſpoſſeſſed before the children of *Iſrael*, in order to bring *Them* into the promiſed Land which he had ſworn to their Forefathers; *one* reaſon why they entred not in ſooner was, *not only* becauſe the *Jews* were not worthy to be ſo *bleſſed*, but becauſe the *Canaanites* had not yet made it neceſſary for themſelves to be ſo *curſed*. *The Iniquity of the* Amorites, ſays the Scripture, *was not yet full*; and the Patience of God towards them, was not yet worn out. He who even out of the *Stones*, if need were, could have raiſed up *children* unto *Abraham*; could much more, if he had ſo pleaſed, have provided a *Country* for the children of *Abraham* to dwell in, without diſpoſſeſſing for them any other people. But *herein* was diſplayed the Wiſdom of the Great Governour of all things, that when the fulneſs of the iniquity of the *Amorites* made it neceſſary for *them* to be diſpoſſeſſed; *then*, and not till *then*, did he bring the *Iſraelites* to the borders of the promiſed Land. At the ſame time did the Divine Patience bear with the provocations of the *Jews in the Wilderneſs, forty years:* Pſ. lxxviii. 41, 38, 39. cvi. 23, 42, 43, 44. *Many a time did they provoke him in the wilderneſs, and grieved him in the deſert: But he was ſo merciful, that he forgave their miſdeeds, and deſtroyed them not: Yea, many a time turned he his wrath away, and would not ſuffer his whole Diſpleaſure to ariſe: He ſaid, he would have deſtroyed them, had not Moſes his choſen ſtood before him in the gap. Many a time were they brought down in their wickedneſs; nevertheleſs, when he ſaw their Adverſity, he heard their Complaint; He thought upon his Covenant; and pitied them.* In following Ages; That ſevere, and as they had *Then* reaſon to apprehend, *unalterable* ſentence againſt *Nineveh*; *yet forty days and Nineveh ſhall be deſtroyed*; was on the contrary intended in the wiſe Counſels of Providence, to be a ſtanding Example of God's Patience towards Sinners. For the *Ninevites*, in that time of reſpite, turned from their evil deeds; and *the Lord* alſo *repented him of the Evil which he ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not*, Jonah iii. 10. Laſtly, in the Caſe of *Jeruſalem*, that perpetual Type of the whole Church; how *affectionately* and with what a *moving* eloquence does our Saviour expreſs the Patience, and the Long-ſuffering of God. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee*; how often *would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* Matt. xxiii. 37. And with what a mixture of tender compaſſion and forbearance, is that Threatning denounced againſt *all* wicked men in general, Rev. ii. 21. *I gave her* ſpace *to repent of her fornication, and ſhe repented not: Behold, I will caſt her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great Tribulation*, except *they repent of their Deeds*. This therefore is the Character of the Divine Patience: Generally ſpeaking, *Sentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily*.

II. The Text repreſents unto us, the *ill Uſe* that wicked men are too apt to make of this divine forbearance: therefore *the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully ſet in them to do evil*. Therefore; That is, not that there is any *reaſon*, not that there is any juſt *ground*, not that any good *Argument* to encourage Men in their Diſobedience, can be drawn from the Long-ſuffering of God: But that in *Fact*, and by ſad *Experience*, it appears too frequently *True*, that wicked men are apt to deceive themſelves, with ſo *abſurd*, ſo *groundleſs*, ſo *unreaſonable* a Proceeding. *Becauſe* God puniſhes them not *immediately*, but gives them ſpace of repentance; therefore they abſurdly *preſume*, or careleſly go on *as* if *they preſumed*, that he would not puniſh them at all. *Where is the Promiſe*, (where is the *Threatning*,) *of his Coming? For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the Creation.* Upon This ground; *Come ye, ſay they* (as the Prophet *Iſaiah* elegantly repreſents them,) *I will fetch Wine, and we will fill ourſelves with ſtrong drink; and to-morrow ſhall be as This day, and much more abundant.* And *Wiſd.* ii. 6. *Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are preſent; and let us ſpeedily uſe the Creatures like as in youth.* Thus wicked and debauched perſons, in

2 Pet. iii. 4.

Iſ. lvi. 12.

in the days of riot, are apt to flatter themſelves: *He hath ſaid in his Heart, tuſh, I ſhall* never *be caſt down, there ſhall no harm happen unto me*, Pſ. x. 6. or, as it is in the new tranſlation, *I ſhall* never *be in adverſity*. That *Thus* it was in *antient* days, the Prophet *Iſaiah*, complains, ch. xxvi. 10. *Let favour be ſhowed to the wicked, yet will he* not *learn righteouſneſs, in the land of uprightneſs will he deal unjuſtly, and will not behold the Majeſty of the Lord.* And that *Thus* it will *continue* to be, among incorrigible Men, to the *end* of the World; our Saviour plainly declares, *Matt.* xxiv. 38. *As in the days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entred into the ark, And knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; So ſhall alſo the Coming of the Son of Man be.* This is the ill *Uſe*, that wicked Men are too apt to make of the divine forbearance. Inſtead of being led thereby to repentance, (which is what God gives them ſpace for;) they on the contrary thence promiſe themſelves final impunity, and their *heart is more fully ſet in them to do evil.* How abſurd This their Concluſion is, and how fooliſh their Practice, in thus abuſing the Patience and Long-ſuffering of God; is the

SERM. XV.

III*d* Head I propoſed to ſpeak to: And it will abundantly appear, from the following Conſiderations.

1*ſt*, Sin is not therefore the leſs *evil in itſelf*, becauſe *not* always *puniſhed immediately*. All Wickedneſs is an endeavouring to confound the *natural order and reaſon of Things*: 'tis a diſhonouring of *ourſelves*, as we are created rational and intelligent Beings; 'tis injurious to other *Men*, as tending always to ſubvert that Peace and Happineſs of the World, which the Wiſdom of Providence has appointed to conſiſt in the Practice of univerſal Righteouſneſs, of Juſtice, Truth, and Charity among Men: 'Tis, finally, offering the higheſt Affront to *God* the *Supreme Governour of All*, who is of *purer eyes than to behold iniquity*; and whoſe *principal* Concern it is, not to ſuffer that *Great* Diſtinction of Things, the Difference of Good and Evil, to be for ever neglected and deſpiſed. *Flee* therefore *from Sin*, ſays the wiſe Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus*, ch. xxi. 2. *Flee from Sin, as from the Face of a Serpent; The Teeth thereof are as the Teeth of a Lion, ſlaying the Souls of Men; All iniquity is as a two-edged Sword, the Wounds whereof cannot be healed:* Cannot; that is, cannot without *much greater Difficulty* be healed, than careleſs Sinners are willing to perſwade themſelves.

2. As *Sin* is not in *itſelf* the leſs *evil*, becauſe *not* always *puniſhed immediately*; ſo neither ought it to be imagined, that *God* is therefore the leſs *provoked*, becauſe there appear not in *Him*, as in vain Mortals, any *ſudden Tranſports* of haſty Paſſion. God is pure and unmixt Reaſon; and as all his *other* Actions are without any emotion in himſelf, ſo he *puniſhes* alſo, not that he has any *pleaſure* in ſo doing, but that the thing is in itſelf right and neceſſary to be done. When therefore he has born with Sinners as long as Wiſdom and Goodneſs thinks reaſonable to bear with them; his Patience, after That, *will* have an End, *Luk.* xiii. 7. *Then ſaid he to the dreſſer of his Vineyard, behold, theſe three years I come ſeeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none; cut it down why cumbereth it the ground?* The *Spirit* of God *will not always ſtrive with man*; neither will he ſuffer himſelf to be *mocked*, and his Laws finally to be *trampled upon. The Holy Spirit of Diſcipline will flee* from *Deceit*, (Wiſd. i. 5.) *and will remove from Thoughts that are without underſtanding, and will not abide when unrighteouſneſs cometh in.* Long did the Patience of God bear with the *Jews* in the Wilderneſs, in the day of their provocation; but at length, *he* ſware *unto them in his wrath, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt*, Pſ. xcv. 11. In *Pſ.* cvi. 26. 'tis thus expreſſed; *he* lifted up his hand *againſt them, to overthrow them in the Wilderneſs:* He *lifted up his hand*, that is, *he ſware unto them*; *ſo* That phraſe ſignifies in the *Hebrew*; and *ſo* it ought therefore to have been tranſlated in *one* Pſalm, as well as in the *other*; and cannot otherwiſe be rightly underſtood. Again, when God had threatned by *Jonah*, that *yet forty* days *and Nineveh ſhall be deſtroyed*; and after That, upon their Repentance, *God* alſo *repented of the evil he had ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not*: yet *forty* years after, when they relapſed again, *Nineveh was* deſtroyed: and the prophecy, which *Jonah* murmured to ſee diſappointed, as *he* thought, was in its time, according to the exactneſs of the Prophetick ſtyle, punctually accompliſhed: as is obſerved in the laſt chapter of

SERM. XV.

the book of *Tobit*, ver. 8 and 15. Laſtly, *Jeruſalem itſelf*, over which our Saviour had expreſſed ſuch tender and affectionate compaſſion, yet had at length, for its impenitency, that *final* Sentence pronounced againſt it, *Matt.* xxiii. 38. *Behold, your Houſe is left unto you deſolate*; and ch. xxiv. 2. *There ſhall not be left one ſtone upon another, that ſhall not be thrown down.* The Application of theſe examples to every one of *Us*, is made by St. *Paul* in that earneſt Admonition, *Rom.* ii. 4. *Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs and forbearance and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to Repentance? But after thy hardneſs and impenitent heart, treaſureſt up to thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?* The *natural* and *proper* effect of the divine forbearance, is to lead Sinners to Repentance: And if it has not that effect, but they on the contrary abuſe his Patience, and deſpiſe his admonitions, adding to their Sin perverſe ingratitude, and moſt diſingenuous Obſtinacy to their Rebellion; the Scripture aſſures us that the Time *will* come, when *they* ſhall cry, and ſhall not be heard; but He *alſo ſhall laugh*
Prov. i. 26. *at their calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh; when their Fear cometh as deſolation, and their deſtruction as a whirl-wind.* Upon which Account, excellent is the Advice of the Son of *Sirach*, Eccluſ. v. 4. *Say not, I have ſinned, and what harm has happened to me? for* though *the Lord is long-ſuffering, he will in no wiſe let thee go:* —— *Say not, his mercy is great, he will be pacified for the multitude of my Sins; For mercy and* Wrath *come from him, and his indignation reſteth upon Sinners.*

3*dly*, As it does not follow that *God* is *leſs Angry* with Sinners, becauſe he *defers* puniſhing them; ſo neither can it be inferred, that the Puniſhment of Sin is at all the *leſs Certain and Unavoidable*, for not being inflicted *immediately*. Among Men, every *delay* is a poſſibility of *Eſcaping*; becauſe *Time and Chance happeneth to them all:* And whatever is at *a diſtance*, is for that very reaſon proportionably *uncertain* whether it ſhall ever come to paſs at all. But with *God*, Time makes no difference in the Certainty of Events; neither can any intervening Accidents ever diſappoint *His* purpoſe. *Tho' a Sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet ſurely* (ſays the Wiſe-man) *I know that it ſhall be well with them that fear God: But it ſhall* not *be well with the Wicked*, Eccles. viii. 12. And St. *Peter* elegantly confutes this fooliſh Hope of Sinners, 2 *ep.* iii. 4. *There ſhall come Scoffers, walking after their own luſts, and ſaying, Where is the Promiſe of his Coming? for ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the Creation:* —— *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thouſand Years, and a thouſand years as one day.* (Not that the one is with God *literally* no longer a duration than the other, as the Schoolmen have fooliſhly taught, who love to make abſurdities even out of the plaineſt things; But the meaning is, that What is at a thouſand Years diſtance; is with God as *Certain*, as if it was to be effected the very next moment.) *The Lord is not ſlack concerning his Promiſe, as ſome men count ſlackneſs; but is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that Any ſhould periſh, but that All ſhould come to Repentance. But the day of the* Lord *will come, as a Thief in the Night.*

4*thly*, As the Puniſhment of Sin is not the *leſs* Certain for being delayed, ſo neither will it be the *leſs* Severe. *Juſtice* (as all the *other* Attributes alſo are) is in the Divine Nature *Neceſſary*. That is: Not that Supreme Power has not a *natural Right* to pardon freely whom he pleaſes, (as ſome have vainly imagined;) but that, *morally* ſpeaking, it is as *Neceſſary* in the Government of the Univerſe, that infinite *Wiſdom* ſhould finally *puniſh* the *incorrigible*; as that infinite *Patience* ſhould *bear with* ſuch as are *capable of Amendment*, and infinite *Mercy* ſhould *pardon* ſuch as do *actually amend*. The Puniſhment of the *Fallen Angels*, the bringing in of the general *Flood*, and the *Overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah*, are *Examples* of this kind, written on purpoſe for our Admonition. *Jude* 6, *The Angels which kept not their firſt eſtate, he has reſerved in chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day.* And the Application is expreſly made by St. *Peter*, 2 *ep.* ii. 4, ——9. *If God ſpared not the Angels that ſinned, but caſt them down to hell;* —— *And ſpared not the Old world,* ——*but brought in the Flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turned the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into aſhes; making them an example unto thoſe that after ſhould live ungodly: If* God did theſe things of old;

the

the Inference is, *The Lord* ſtill *knoweth how* ——*to reſerve the unjuſt unto the day of judgment to be puniſhed.* And of *all* unjuſt perſons, *none* more exemplarily than thoſe, who *therefore* preſume to abuſe the Patience of God, becauſe *Sentence againſt an Evil work is not executed ſpeedily.* Deut. xxix. 19. *If, when a man heareth the words of this Curſe, he bleſs himſelf in his heart, ſaying, I ſhall have peace, tho' I walk in the imagination of my heart; The Lord will not ſpare him, but the anger of the Lord ſhall ſmoke againſt that man, and all the Curſes that are written in this book ſhall lie upon him. Jeruſalem,* and the Nation of the *Jews,* are at this day a ſtanding Inſtance of this great Truth: Whom, after long forbearance and repeated admonition, God at laſt overthrew with ſuch a total Deſtruction, as never befel any *other* Nation under Heaven. Beſides: From the Sufferings even of *good* men, the *profane and impenitent* may well collect, that the divine Patience will not permit them to go for ever unpuniſhed. *Judgment,* ſays the Apoſtle, *muſt begin at the houſe of God; and if it firſt begin at* us, *what ſhall the end be of them that obey not the goſpel of God. And if the* righteous *ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* The Judgments of God in this *preſent* Life, which fall upon *mixt multitudes* of *good and bad,* are frequently very terrible: *Who* then ſhall bear the vengeance of his *final* Wrath, when he ſhall have ſeparated entirely the Goats from the Sheep, into the *proper place of Torment?* Tho' even *There* alſo, exact *Juſtice* ſhall reign; and *Damnation itſelf* ſhall be inflicted, with perfect accuracy of *Weight and Meaſure.* 1 Pet. iv. 17.

SERM. XV.

5*thly* and *laſtly*; As the Puniſhment of Sin neither *is* the leſs *certain,* nor *will be* the leſs *ſevere,* for being uſually *delayed*; ſo neither can a Sinner from thence at any time depend, that it ſhall not overtake him the very next moment. For *whenever* it comes upon an impenitent Debauchee, it ſurprizes him *as a Thief in the Night*; and the *Execution* of *Sentence againſt an evil work,* how *long ſoever* delayed, yet *when* it comes, ſeems as ſpeedy as if *no Space* had intervened. *As the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the birds that are caught in the ſnare; ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly on them.* Vain therefore and fooliſh, beyond *all other* Inſtances of Folly, is the behaviour of *thoſe* impenitent Sinners, whoſe heart is *therefore* ſet in them to do evil, becauſe *their Lord delayeth his coming.* Of which Divine Forbearance, if they make not That Uſe for which it was deſigned, ſo as to be led thereby to Repentance; their Lord will *come in a day when they think not of it, and at an hour which they are not aware of, and will cut them in ſunder, and appoint them their portion with Unbelievers; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* Thus the *Juſtice and Mercy,* the *Severity* and the *Patience* of God, are perfectly conſiſtent with each other; and together with *all the other* Attributes of the Divine Nature, unite uniformly in one and the ſame point; which is, the promoting everlaſting Righteouſneſs and true Virtue through the whole Creation. Which matter whoſoever ſeriouſly and wiſely conſiders; will neither ſuperſtitiouſly dread the Power, nor deſpair becauſe of the Juſtice, nor preſume upon the Patience and Mercy of God; but will ſerve him with Fear, and adore him with Love, and be led to Repentance by Hope, and improve daily more and more in the Practice of all Chriſtian Virtues and Graces, till the time comes that he ſhall be made perfectly like unto God, becauſe he ſhall ſee him as he is.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

Of the JUSTICE of GOD.

JOB. XXXIV. 10, 11, 12.

Therefore hearken unto Me, ye men of Underſtanding: Far be from God, that He ſhould do wickedneſs; and from the Almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity: For the work of Man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every man to find according to his Ways: Yea, ſurely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert Judgment.

SERM. XVI.

THESE words are a very lively and emphatical Deſcription of the *Juſtice and Righteouſneſs* of the Supreme Governour of all things; *introduced* with an affectionate Appeal to the common Reaſon of Mankind for the *Truth* of the Aſſertion; and *cloſed* with an eloquent repetition of the *Aſſurance* of its Certainty. The *Aſſertion* of the Juſtice of God is in *theſe* words: *Far be it from God, that He ſhould do wickedneſs; and from the Almighty, that He ſhould commit iniquity.* The *Deſcription, wherein* this Juſtice conſiſts, is in the words which follow: *The Work of a Man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every man to find according to his Ways.* The Whole is *introduced* with an Appeal to the *common Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind*, for the Truth of what is here affirmed: Hearken unto Me, ye men of underſtanding; *Far be it from God, that He ſhould do wickedneſs.* And the Propoſition is *cloſed* with the elegant repetition of the ſame Aſſurance: Yea, ſurely *God will not do wickedly, neither*

SERM. XVI.

neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. There are and will be *difficulties* in the adminiſtration of Providence; But theſe *difficulties* affect only ſuch as are *careleſs* in matters of Religion; and they can never make *reaſonable and conſiderate perſons*, men *of attention and underſtanding*, to doubt concerning the *Righteouſneſs* of the Divine Government: *Hearken unto Me, ye men* of Underſtanding; *Far be it from God, that He ſhould do Wickedneſs.* A righteous and juſt Man may be depended upon that he will not do an unjuſt thing: Much *more* therefore far be it from the Almighty, far be it from the Supreme *Lord* and *Governour* of *all* things, that *He* ſhould commit iniquity. Many things *myſterious*, many things *incomprehenſible*, there needs muſt be in the nature of the Supreme Being: But *Injuſtice or Iniquity*, *Hard or Unrighteous Dealing* with any of his Creatures; This, above all things, *far be it from* him; This, *whatever* we do, *far* ought we to keep it from all our Notions and Conceptions of him. *Objections* will be ſtarted, and *Difficulties* (in particular caſes) cannot but ariſe: But whether we can anſwer them or no, we are *ſure* they muſt be falſe; becauſe no evidence can be *ſo ſtrong*, in proof of any *particular* doctrine inconſiſtent with this Notion, *as* are the Arguments which prove in *general* the truth of the divine Juſtice. However therefore our ſhort underſtanding may perhaps fail in reconciling things, yet the *Foundation* muſt be ſtood to as being *demonſtrably* true, and what can *never* be moved; yea, ſurely *God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.*

My Deſign in the following Diſcourſe upon theſe words is to *prove* briefly, that God *is* and *cannot but be* Juſt; to *explain wherein* the Nature of that Juſtice conſiſts; to *remove* the *Objections* ariſing from *particular* caſes againſt this *general* Truth; and finally, to *apply* what ſhall be ſaid, by ſome *uſeful Inferences* in Practice. And

1*ſt*, That the Supreme Lord and Governour of all things *is* and *cannot but be* Juſt *in all his Actions*, may be made appear in the following manner. There being neceſſarily in Nature a *Difference* of Things, which is what we call *Natural* Good and Evil; and a Variety in the Diſpoſitions and Qualifications of Perſons, which is what we call *Moral* Good and Evil; from the due or undue adjuſtment of theſe *Natural Qualities* of *Things* to the *moral Qualifications* of *Perſons*, ariſe unavoidably the Notions of *Right and Wrong*. Now the *Will* of every intelligent Agent being always directed by ſome *Motive*; 'tis plain the *natural Motive of Action*, where nothing irregular interpoſes, can be no other than This *Right, or Reaſon of Things*. Whenever therefore This *Right and Reaſon* are not made the *Rule of Action*; it can only be, either becauſe the Agent is *ignorant* of what is Right, or wants Ability to purſue it, or elſe is *knowingly and willingly diverted from it* by the *Hope of ſome Good*, or *Fear of ſome Evil*. But now None of theſe cauſes of Injuſtice, can poſſibly have any place in *God*: *His* Actions therefore muſt always neceſſarily be directed by *Right and Reaſon and Juſtice only*. For, having *all Knowledge*, 'tis impoſſible he can be *deceived* in *judging* what is Right: having no *Want* of any thing, his *Will* cannot poſſibly be *influenced* by any *wrong Affection*; and having no *Dependence*, his *Power* can never be limited by any *ſuperiour Strength*. 'Tis very evident therefore, that He who *knows* thus *perfectly* the *Rule of Equity*, and neceſſarily *judges of things as they really Are*; who has *complete Power* to execute Juſtice according to that Knowledge, and *no poſſible temptation* to deviate in the leaſt therefrom; who can neither be *impoſed upon* by any *Deceit*, nor *moved* by any *Biaſs*, nor *awed* by any *Power*; 'tis very evident (I ſay) that ſuch a Being will always do what is *Right*; without iniquity, and without partiality; without prejudice, and without reſpect of Perſons.

There is a ſhorter way, which has frequently been made uſe of, to prove that all the Actions of *God* muſt *needs* be *Juſt*; by alledging, that whatever *He* does is *therefore* Juſt, becauſe *He* does it. Which Argument is not *proving*, but *ſuppoſing*, the thing in Queſtion: For, the *Reaſon why* God's doing a thing proves it to be Juſt, is only upon This foundation, that, knowing him to be a perfectly Juſt Being, we are ſure, if the thing had not been in itſelf Juſt, he *would not* have done it. And in *This* ſenſe indeed the Argument is very good and reaſonable. But thoſe who uſe it have generally turned it to a very different and

SERM. XVI.

very falſe Meaning: As if, becauſe whatever *God* does is certainly *Juſt*; therefore, whatever *Unjuſt and Unreaſonable* things they in their Syſtems of Divinity aſcribe to him, were made *juſt and reaſonable* by their ſuppoſing *God* to be the Author of them: Or, becauſe the *Eſſence* of God is *incomprehenſible*, and all his *Attributes* infinitely *tranſcending* the Perfections of any finite Beings; that therefore *Juſtice* in *Him*, was not the ſame thing, nor to be judged of by the ſame Notions, as Juſtice among *Men*: Or that, God being *All-powerful*, and having no Superiour to render an account to of what he does; therefore *whatever* is aſcribed to *Him*, though *in itſelf* it may ſeem *unjuſt*, and *would be* Unjuſt among Men, yet by *Supreme power* is made *Juſt and Right*. And upon *This* kind of Reaſoning is built the Doctrine of *abſolute Reprobation*, and ſome other the like Opinions. But now, in reality, *What* is this elſe, but ſpeaking deceitfully for God, and deſtroying the Truth of the divine Attributes, under the appearance of defending them? For if every thing that *Power* can do, is Juſt; *What* then is *Juſtice*, but *mere* Power only, and not any thing *really* in the *Nature* of Things? And ſo, the worſt and moſt cruel Being in the World, with ſufficient *Power* annext, would in theſe mens Senſe, be as *Juſt*, as Supreme Goodneſs itſelf. The alledging in this manner the *Power of God*, to the deſtroying our moral Notion of *Juſtice*, is like alledging the ſame Power, in the caſe of Tranſubſtantiation, to the deſtroying the natural Truth of *Things*. The Effect of *Both* is the confounding the whole Nature of Truth and Falſehood, of Right and Wrong; and making every thing to be unintelligible and without Meaning. One *ſenſe* indeed there is, in which *Supreme Power may* be ſaid to be the Foundation of *Juſtice*: And That is, becauſe *ſuch Power* ſets the Perſon, who poſſeſſes it, above all poſſibility of being *tempted*, or *compelled* by any *Fraud*, or by any *Force*, to do an unjuſt thing. And in *This* ſenſe, the Argument ſeems to be uſed by *Elihu* in the Text; *Job* xxxiv. 10. *Far be it from* God, (from Him who is Supreme over All,) *that* He *ſhould do* Wickedneſs; *and from the* Almighty, (from Him who has *Power* over All,) *that* He *ſhould commit iniquity*. And by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, very elegantly; ch. xii. ver. 12, 15, 16, 18, *Who ſhall ſay, what haſt* Thou *done? ---- or Who ſhall accuſe Thee for the Nations that periſh, whom thou haſt made? or Who ſhall come to ſtand againſt thee, to be revenged for the unrighteous men? For* ſeeing *thou art righteous thyſelf, thou ordereſt all things righteouſly; thinking it not agreeable with thy* Power, *to condemn him that hath not deſerved to be puniſhed: For thy* Power *is the beginning of Righteouſneſs; and, becauſe thou art Lord of All, it maketh thee to be gracious unto all.* For *Thou, maſtering thy Power, judgeſt with equity, and ordereſt us with great favour; for Thou mayeſt uſe Power when thou wilt.* In *This* ſenſe, I ſay, *Power may* be affirmed indeed to be the foundation of *Juſtice*; as ſetting the Perſon who is poſſeſſed of it, far above all temptation of doing wrong. But in any *other* ſenſe to make *Power* the Meaſure of *Juſtice*; and to imagine that Juſtice in *God*, is not the ſame thing as Juſtice among *Men*, but ſomething tranſcendent, and we know not what; is in reality ſubverting the Nature of Things, taking away the intrinſick difference between Good and Evil, and overturning the ground of all Religion. For, tho' the *Eſſence* of God, which it is *not* our buſineſs to underſtand, is really incomprehenſible; as indeed are the *Eſſences* of *all other* things; yet the Notion of his moral *Attributes muſt* be eaſy and familiar; and, if we could not underſtand *Theſe*, the *whole Doctrine* of the Goſpel would be *inſignificant* to us. For, all Revelation from God *ſuppoſeth* us to *know beforehand* what is meant by *Juſtice*, Goodneſs, and the like. So that no man can reaſonably entertain any Notion of God, contradictory to Theſe, upon any pretence whatſoever. And 'tis very abſurd for any one to pretend, that we cannot underſtand what *Juſtice in God* is: For if we underſtand not This, 'tis all one to us whether God be juſt or not. Neither would it be poſſible for us to *imitate* his Juſtice: For he who *imitates*, endeavours to be *Like* ſomething that he *Knows*; and muſt of neceſſity underſtand, *what* 'tis he aims to be like. So that if we had no certain and ſettled Notion of the Juſtice, and other Moral Attributes of God, Religion, which

conſiſts

conſiſts in the imitation of him, would be altogether unintelligible to our Minds and impoſſible to our Practice. SERM. XVI.

And All This is in Scripture ſo conſtantly ſuppoſed to be True, that God There perpetually *appeals* to the common Reaſon and natural Judgment of Mankind for the Equity of his Dealings with them: For the Equity, not of *particular Providences*, which 'tis impoſſible men in this ſhort period of life ſhould be capable of obſerving; but he appeals to them for the Equity of his *general Laws* or Rules of Government. *O Houſe of Iſrael, are not my ways equal, are not your ways unequal?* Ezek. xviii. 29. *Judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and my Vineyard; What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Iſ. v. 3. St. *Paul* in like manner, ſpeaking of the Judgments of God, declares that *all Mouths ſhall be ſtopped before him*, not by the irreſiſtibleneſs of his *Power*, but by the conviction of the *righteouſneſs* and Juſtice of his Sentence; *Rom.* iii. 4, cited from 51ſt Pſalm, *That thou mighteſt be juſtified in thy ſayings, and mighteſt overcome when thou art judged.* Theſe are very plain and full declarations, both that God *is Juſt*, and that men are well capable of underſtanding *What* that Juſtice is, which is ſo eminent a Perfection of the divine Nature. And to this *natural Senſe and Knowledge of Right* it is, that our Saviour himſelf appeals, when he ſays, *Luk.* xii. 57. *Yea, and why even of* yourſelves *judge ye not what is right?* and when he ſo often repeats it in his Preaching to the *Jews*, *He that hath* Ears *to hear, let him hear.*

Having thus proved *in general*, that God *is* and *cannot but be* Juſt; which was the *firſt* thing propoſed: I proceed now in the

IId place, To endeavour to explain *more particularly*, wherein the Nature of that Juſtice conſiſts. And here it may be neceſſary to *premiſe*, that *Juſtice* is of two ſorts; There is a Juſtice which conſiſts in a diſtribution of *Equality*, and there is a Juſtice which conſiſts in a diſtribution of *Equity*. The *former ſort* belongs to ſuch Perſons, as have no other Authority, but only a Power of diſtributing to ſeveral perſons *equally* their reſpective Dues: The *Latter ſort* of Juſtice belongs to ſuch a perſon, as having complete Right and Authority to do what he wills with his own, and diſtributing his free Gifts *variouſly* in *what proportion he pleaſes*, afterward diſpenſes *equitable* Rewards and Puniſhments, according to the different Uſe each man makes of the different Gifts he is reſpectively intruſted with. And of This *latter* ſort, is the *Juſtice of God*. God is the Supreme Lord and Author of all; and as all his Gifts are free, 'tis evident he is under no more obligation to diſtribute them *equally*, than he was originally obliged to diſtribute them at all. He gives to one man after This manner, and to another after That; and then his Juſtice conſiſts in dealing with every one proportionably, according to the Analogy of their different behaviour under ſuch different Circumſtances. In the matter of *Puniſhment*; his Juſtice requires that it ſhould always be apportioned with the moſt ſtrict exactneſs, to the Degree or Demerit of the Crime: That is to ſay, that no man muſt be puniſhed *more* than he deſerves; though, on the contrary, He that is Supreme over all, may accept of as much *leſs* puniſhment, or may *remit* puniſhment upon any ſuch *free* conditions of his own gracious appointment, as he himſelf in the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of his Government ſhall think fit and reaſonable: And This is the True Foundation of the Goſpel-Mercy, made known to us from God by and through Chriſt. As to the Matter of *Reward*; Juſtice *originally* is not concerned at all; becauſe at the beſt, men, even if they were ſinleſs Creatures, are but unprofitable Servants; and, doing only what is their Duty to do, however they would have a right to eſcape Puniſhment, yet they *could* have *no* claim of Merit to a Reward. But *in conſequence of God's free Promiſe*, good men *have a juſt* title to the Reward promiſed them; and the *Juſtice of God* in the diſtribution of this Reward conſiſts in *This*, that they who by the *Grace of God*, and according to the *merciful Tenour of the Goſpel-covenant*, ſhall be found to have *obeyed the Laws of Righteouſneſs*, ſhall, according to the *proportion* of the good Uſe they have made

SERM. XVI.

made of their reſpective Gifts, have a *proportionably greater* ſhare beſtowed upon them of that future Happineſs; the *whole* of which is merely God's *free Gift* indeed and undeſerved Bounty, and yet at the ſame time *ſuch* is good mens *Title* to it upon account of the Promiſe, that the Apoſtle thought it not an improper expreſſion, to ſay, *God is not* unrighteous, *to forget your work and labour of Love*, Heb. vi. 10.

Now this obſervation being *premiſed*, for the preventing any miſtake in the General Notion of the Divine Juſtice; the Particulars *wherein* this Juſtice conſiſts, or which it principally *includes*, are theſe which follow; 1*ſt*, an *Impartiality*, with regard to Perſons; and 2*dly*, an *Equity* of Diſtribution, with regard to things. To the *Perſons* of men he has *no Reſpect*; but, in the final iſſue of Things, he will *upon the whole* deal equitably with *all* his creatures; and in the diſtribution of *Rewards and Puniſhments in particular*, he will obſerve ſtrictly an exact and righteous *proportion*. 1*ſt*, The Notion of divine Juſtice includes an abſolute *Impartiality* with regard to *Perſons*. All men are alike the Work of God's hands; and therefore as 'tis evident he could originally have no regard to one more than to another, ſo when the various diſpenſations of infinite Wiſdom ſhall at the great Period and Conſummation of Nature have accompliſhed and unfolded *the myſtery of God*, it will manifeſtly appear, that finally alſo he has been *no Reſpecter of Perſons*. There are indeed in Scripture many particular *inſtances*, which at firſt ſight may ſeem not eaſily reconcileable with this great Truth: But the *general Rule itſelf* is ſo clearly and expreſly laid down, and ſo perpetually repeated and appealed to upon every occaſion; that no obſcurity or difficulty in the explication of particular caſes, can be oppoſed to the Evidence of ſo plain a Rule. The *general* Propoſition we may depend upon as certain, however difficult it may appear at preſent to reconcile the *particulars*; and whatever *Clouds and Darkneſs are round about him*, *yet* we are ſure *Righteouſneſs and Judgment* are *the Habitation of his Seat*. 'Tis an obſervation of great importance, and neceſſary to be attended to in This, as in moſt other Doctrines of Religion; that obſcurer paſſages of Scripture are always to be interpreted by the plain ones, and not the plain ones made doubtful by thoſe that are more obſcure. And the Reaſon is evident: Becauſe that which is at preſent obſcure, may very eaſily in the event of things, and in the unfolding of Providence, have the difficulties removed, and make a final Harmony and Conſiſtency of the whole; But if that which is once clearly and plainly revealed, in words expreſs and full, and without ambiguity, is ever in any wiſe to be ſhaken by any after-diſcovery; or if a *general* and perpetual Rule can be made in any degree uncertain, by the preſent difficulty of application of any *particular* caſe: there can Then never be *any* certain Aſſurance of the Truth of *Any* Doctrine or Revelation at all. To apply this to our preſent Subject: Whatever difficulty there may be at preſent, in reconciling God's being no Reſpecter of Perſons with the many ſeeming Advantages we find in Scripture granted at any time to one particular Nation, Family, or Perſon, more than to other Nations, Families, or Perſons; (which Difficulty will come to be conſidered under my *Third* general head, wherein I propoſed to remove the *Objections* that may be alledged againſt the Impartiality of the divine Juſtice;) Whatever Difficulty, I ſay, there may poſſibly be at preſent in reconciling theſe Things to each other; yet the general *Declaration*, or the univerſal Truth of the *Doctrine* itſelf, that *God is no Reſpecter of Perſons*, is ſo clearly and diſtinctly, ſo expreſly and fully, ſo conſtantly and with ſuch earneſtneſs laid down and inculcated in every part of the Scripture, as a *Foundation never to be departed from* in all queſtions of Religion; that we may be very ſure, God will thoroughly juſtify it in the end; and ſhow us, that whatever Now appears to us as an exception to this Rule, was nothing elſe but our beholding in an imperfect and broken View, only ſome ſmall portions of his All-wiſe Proceedings. In the *infancy* of the world, the patriarch *Abraham*, when he took upon him to plead with God for *Sodom*, lays down This as a Rule or Foundation, upon which *every* Argument muſt for ever be built, *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 23.

In

In the book of *Job*, *Elihu*, diſputing with *Job*'s friends, argues in like manner from the Light of Nature and common Reaſon; ch. xxxiv. 1 --- 19. *Hear my words, O ye wiſe men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge;* --- God *accepteth not the perſons of Princes, nor regardeth the Rich more than the Poor, for they* all *are the work of* His *hands.* In the revelation God made of himſelf to *Moſes*, the character he commanded *Moſes* to give of him to the *Iſraelites*, is exactly agreeable to the ſame *Natural* Notion; *Deut.* x. 14, 17. *Behold, the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens is the Lord's thy God, the Earth alſo with all that therein is;* —— *he is a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not perſons, nor taketh reward; He doth execute the judgment of the fatherleſs and widow, and loveth the ſtranger, in giving him food and raiment.* In the book of *Pſalms*, wherein are devoutly celebrated all the divine Attributes, the Juſtice of God is thus likewiſe ſet forth; *Pſ.* xcviii. 9. *With righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the world, and the people* (that is, all nations) *with Equity.* In the inſtructions given by good King *Jehoſhaphat* to the Judges which he appointed through all the Cities of *Judah*; the ſame Notion of the impartiality of the divine Juſtice is ſtill preſerved; 2 *Chr.* xix. 7. *Let the fear of the Lord*, (ſays he) *be upon you; take heed, and do righteouſneſs; for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor reſpect of perſons, nor taking of Gifts.* In the Writings of the *Prophets*, this Juſtice of God, in oppoſition to all Reſpecting of perſons, is ſtill more emphatically expreſt; *Jer.* xxii. 24. *As I live, ſaith the Lord; Though Coniah the Son of Jehoiakim King of Judah, were the* ſignet upon my right hand, *yet would I pluck thee thence.* And concerning the *whole nation of the Jews*, that peculiar people of God; elect, and *beloved for the Fathers ſakes*; to whom in a ſingular manner, were committed the divine oracles; and of whom it was written, that God *did not deal ſo with any other nation, neither had the Heathen knowledge of his laws*; yet even concerning *This* people, when they tranſgreſſed the Law that had been given them, *Will he regard your* Perſons, ſaith the Divine Juſtice? *Mal.* i. 6. *I have no pleaſure in you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand: For from the riſing of the Sun even unto the going down of the ſame, my name ſhall be great among the* Gentiles, —— and *my name ſhall be great among the* Heathen, *ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* In the *New Teſtament*, our Saviour in *the Goſpel* repeats the ſame doctrine to the *Phariſees*, Mat. xxi. 43. *The Kingdom of God ſhall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof: And I ſay unto you, that many ſhall come from the eaſt and from the weſt, and ſhall ſit* Ch. viii. 11, 12. *down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven; But the children of the Kingdom ſhall be caſt out into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* For, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord;* (not every Profeſſor of the true Religion, not every member of the People or Church of God,) *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that* doth *the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.* In the Acts *of the Apoſtles*, ch. x. 34. *Of a Truth*, ſaith St. *Peter, I perceive that God is no reſpecter of Perſons; But in every Nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.* In their *Epiſtles*, the ſame doctrine is perpetually inculcated as the Foundation of all religion: *Rom.* ii. 6, — 10. *God will render to* every *man according to his deeds,* —— *to the* Jew *firſt, and alſo to the* Gentile; *For there is no reſpect of perſons with God. For as many as have ſinned without law, ſhall alſo periſh without law; and as many as have ſinned in the law, ſhall be judged by the law;* —— *In the day when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt.* Again, *Epheſ.* vi. 8. *Whatſoever* good *things any man doth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free,* --- for there is no *reſpect of perſons with him*; Likewiſe, *he that doth* wrong, *ſhall receive for the wrong that he hath done; and there is* Col. iii. 25. *no reſpect of perſons.* Theſe repeated Declarations of Scripture from one End of the *Bible* to the other are ſo full and plain, that, were the difficulties which ariſe from *particular* caſes, to *our* apprehenſion altogether unanſwerable, (as I ſhall ſhow in its proper place they by no means are, when I come to conſider the ſeveral

SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI.

1 Pet. i, 17.

ral Objections that may be alledged;) yet the *general Doctrine itſelf* would nevertheleſs be certain and eſtabliſhed as a *firſt Principle*, as a fundamental *Rule* of interpretation, to which every thing elſe muſt of neceſſity be underſtood to agree; *viz.* that *God*, without reſpect of perſons, *judgeth according to every man's work*.

And this is the *firſt* particular, included in the Notion of divine Juſtice; an *Impartiality* with regard to Perſons. The *ſecond*, is an *Equity* of diſtribution, with regard to Things; That is, the obſerving an exact proportion in the ſeveral *particular* degrees of Reward and Puniſhment, as well as an Impartiality and determining *what* perſons ſhall be in *general* rewarded or puniſhed. But the inlargement upon *This* Head muſt be referred to a farther opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

Of the JUSTICE of GOD.

JOB. XXXIV. 10, 11, 12.

Therefore hearken unto Me, ye men of Underſtanding: Far be it from God, that He ſhould do wickedneſs; and from the Almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity: For the work of a Man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every man to find according to his Ways: Yea, ſurely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert Judgment.

SERM. XVII.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe I propoſed to treat of the *Divine Juſtice* after the following Method: 1*ſt*, to *prove* that God *is* and *cannot but be* Juſt; 2*dly*, to *explain* wherein the Nature of that Juſtice conſiſts: 3*dly*, to *remove* the Objections ariſing from *particular* caſes againſt this *general* Truth: And finally, to apply what ſhall be ſaid, by ſome *uſeful Inferences* in Practice. In the *firſt* place, that God *is and cannot but be* Juſt, I have already proved at large: *Secondly*, in explaining *wherein* the Nature of this divine Juſtice conſiſts, I obſerved that it includes, (1*ſt*) an *Impartiality* with regard to *Perſons*, and (2*dly*) an *Equity* of Diſtribution, with regard to *Things*. Concerning the *Impartiality* of the divine Juſtice with regard to *Perſons*, I have already diſcourſed. That which I am now to proceed to in the next place, according to the Method propoſed, is to ſhow that it denotes likewiſe an *Equity* of diſtribution with regard to *Things*. That is to ſay; it includes the obſerving an exact proportion in the ſeveral *particular* degrees of

SERM. XVII.

of Reward and Puniſhment, as well as an Impartiality in determining what Perſons ſhall be *in general* rewarded or puniſhed. And of This, the Scripture gives us a very clear and diſtinct Account: Aſſuring us, that *they that be wiſe*, that is, who *Themſelves* obey the commandments of God, *ſhall ſhine as the Brightneſs of the Firmament*; and *they that turn* many *to righteouſneſs*, which is ſtill a more excellent pitch of Virtue, ſhall be *as* the Stars, the diſtinguiſhed Glory of the Firmament itſelf, *for ever and ever*: And that, even among *Theſe*, as *one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory*, ſo ſhall it be alſo at the Reſurrection of the dead: That, one man ſhall receive a *Prophet's reward*; and another the *reward of a righteous man*; and a third, in a rank ſtill inferiour to Both of theſe, yet for *giving to drink* but *a cup of cold water to one of* Chriſt's *little ones*, that is, to a perſon any way perſecuted for conſcience ſake, *ſhall in no wiſe loſe his Reward:* That according to men's different improvements of the Talents committed to their charge, One ſhall be made *Ruler over five Cities*, and another *over ten*: That, *every man ſhall receive his* own *reward, according to his* own *labour*; *reaping ſparingly* or *bountifully*, accordingly as he hath *ſparingly* or *bountifully ſown:* or if he has *built hay and ſtubble*, that is needleſs and unprofitable Doctrines upon the foundation of Chriſt; ſo as in great meaſure to *loſe* his Reward, becauſe his Work was uſeleſs; yet, if he was truly *ſincere and upright* in his intention, for the integrity of his Heart, *He himſelf ſhall be ſaved*, tho' *ſo as by Fire*; that is, with great Difficulty, as a man eſcapes with his Life out of a houſe on Fire, wherein his Goods are conſuming. Laſtly, the different Degrees of the Reward of good men, are moſt elegantly ſet forth by St. *John* in his Deſcription of the heavenly *Jeruſalem*, as of a royal City; *the City*, as our Saviour himſelf ſtyles it, *the City of the Great King*; within which, the *Glory of God's* preſence did more immediately ſhine, *and the Lamb was the Light thereof*; and without, the *Nations of them that are ſaved* did *walk in the Light of it*, Rev. xxi. 23; and ch. xxii. 2. *In the midſt* of it *was the Tree of Life, which yielded her* Fruit *every Month, and the* Leaves *of the Tree were for the Healing of the Nations.*

Dan. xii. 3.

1 Cor. xv. 41.

Mat. x. 41.

Luk. xix. 17.

1 Cor. iii. 8.

2 Cor. ix. 6.

1 Cor. iii. 13.

1 Cor. iii. 15.

Again on the other ſide, as in the diſtribution of *Rewards*, ſo in the allotment of the Degrees of *Puniſhment* likewiſe, does the Scripture clearly ſet forth to us the exact Impartiality of the Divine Juſtice. The words of our Saviour are expreſs and full, St. *Luk.* xii. 47. *That Servant which* knew *his Lord's Will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his Will, ſhall be beaten with* many *ſtripes*; *But he that* knew not, *and did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with* few *ſtripes*: For *unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required*; *and to whom men have committed much, of Him they will ask the more.* Accordingly, againſt the *Phariſees*, who had the beſt opportunities of ſeeing and conſidering his mighty Works, our Saviour always denounces his *ſevereſt* Judgments for their Hypocriſy and Unbelief. *Other* ſorts of Sinners he always reproved with ſingular Tenderneſs, and exhorted to Repentance with all Meekneſs and Compaſſion; But the *Phariſees*, who ſinned againſt the cleareſt Light, and with the greateſt Obſtinacy, he conſtantly challenged with the utmoſt ſharpneſs, as incorrigible hypocrites, as a generation of Vipers. *To him that* knoweth *to do good, and doth it not, to Him it is Sin*, Jam. iv. 17. The *Phariſees* had a learned and a religious education; and they deſpiſed the reſt of the people, as, in compariſon with themſelves, blind and ignorant: Yet their Lives were vitious, notwithſtanding that Knowledge; and then, the very thing they boaſted of was their great Condemnation. *Jeſus ſaid unto them, If ye were blind, ye ſhould have no Sin; but Now ye ſay, We ſee; Therefore your Sin remaineth*, Joh. ix. 41. It *remaineth*; that is, you ſtand moſt clearly and moſt inexcuſably convicted of it. Their Learning and Knowledge in the Law and the Prophets qualified them to hear the words of Chriſt, and to obſerve his Works, with greater Advantage: And therefore he ſays unto them, *Joh.* xv. 22. *If I had not come and* ſpoken *unto them, they had not had Sin*; (that is, *comparatively* ſpeaking, their Sin had been nothing to what it Now is;) *But Now, they have no cloak for their Sin*; — *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had Sin; but Now they have both ſeen, and hated both Me and my Father.* And in proportion to This aggravation of their Fault, does he accordingly enhance the Severity of their Puniſh-

Puniſhment; *Theſe*, ſaith he, *ſhall receive* greater *Damnation*; Mar. xii. 40. He does not only threaten them with God's final wrath in general, in common with all other wicked men; *O ye generation of vipers, how can ye eſcape the Damnation of Hell*? Matt. xxiii. 33; but he adds moreover in particular, ver. 14. *Ye ſhall receive a* greater *Damnation:* In the original it is, a *more abundant* condemnation; a Meaſure of Wrath, *over and above* the general Sentence which ſhall paſs upon the World of the Ungodly. SERM. XVII.

In like manner, comparing the *whole Nation* of the unbelieving *Jews* with the infidel Heathen World; and conſidering how wilfully and with what aggravating circumſtances They rejected thoſe means of Salvation, which perhaps many of the Heathen would in the like caſe gladly have accepted; he accordingly declares concerning them, Mat. x. 15. *Verily I ſay unto you, it ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that City.*

Laſtly, In that ſublime and affectionate deſcription of the great judgment, *Rev.* xx. 11, *and* 19, 20. there is made a very remarkable diſtinction of this kind: *I ſaw a great white throne, and him that ſat on it; from whoſe face the Earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them: And I ſaw the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand before God; and the books were opened, — and the dead were judged out of thoſe things which were written in the Books, according to their Works: And whoſoever was not found written in the book of Life, was caſt into the lake of Fire.* But *the Beaſt* and — *the falſe Prophet*, — which *deceived the* Nations, — *theſe Both were caſt* Alive *into the Lake of Fire burning with Brimſtone.* The Diſtinction made by *Moſes* in the caſe of the *firſt* Death, *Num.* xvi. 29. *If theſe men die the common death of all men, or if they be viſited after the viſitation of all men; then the Lord hath not ſent Me; But if the Lord make a new thing, and the Earth open her mouth and ſwallow them up, — and they go down quick* [or *Alive*] *into the pit; then ye ſhall underſtand that theſe men have provoked the Lord*: The *ſame* diſtinction (I ſay) ſeems to be made by St. *John* in the caſe of the *ſecond* Death; *Theſe* Two (ſaith he) *were caſt* Alive *into the lake of fire, burning with Brimſtone*; That is, they were repreſented to be ſo diſtinguiſhed in the degree of a *ſeverer Puniſhment*, as they had been in the guilt of a more *provoking Wickedneſs.*

From all theſe paſſages of Scripture it abundantly appears, that the true and complete Notion of the Divine Juſtice includes his obſerving an exact Proportion in the ſeveral *particular* Degrees of Reward and Puniſhment, as well as an Impartiality in determining what Perſons ſhall be *in general* Rewarded or Puniſhed.

Now This *Juſtice* of God, as it will in the *End* certainly exert itſelf according to this exact Proportion in the final Diſtributions of the Great day; ſo in the *preſent* intermediate Time, that God might not leave himſelf wholly without Witneſs, he has frequently in the courſe of his Providence given remarkable Preludes, or *particular* Inſtances and ſignifications of his *general* Intention, in extraordinary *Deliverances* of *Good Men*, and exemplary *Puniſhments* of the Bad, in all generations. His bringing in the *Flood* upon the World of the Ungodly, was a temporal Inſtance of his Juſtice: And our Lord tells us, that *as the days of Noah were, ſo ſhall alſo the coming of the Son of Man be; For as in the days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark; And knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; So ſhall alſo the coming of the Son of Man be*, Matt. xxiv. 37. And as righteous *Noah* was then delivered in the Ark from *temporal* Deſtruction by the divine Juſtice; ſo by *a like figure*, ſays the Apoſtle, *Baptiſm alſo*, that is, *not the putting away of the filth of the Fleſh*, not the bare external Form or Ceremony, *but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*, ſhall finally ſave *Us* from everlaſting Perdition. Again: The overthrow of *Sodom and Gomorrha*, was another *temporal* Inſtance of the divine Juſtice, by which thoſe Cities were *ſet forth for an Example, ſuffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire:* Of *eternal* Jude 7. *Fire*; that is, not the Fire of *Hell*, for That, being inviſible, cannot yet be ſaid to be *ſet forth for an example*; But thoſe Cities were made an Example by that *temporal* fire, the *Effect* whereof was *eternal*, bringing upon them remedileſs

SERM. XVII.

and endleſs Deſtruction. And This, was an *Emblem*, or *Earneſt*, of God's *final* Juſtice. For ſo our Saviour argues, St. *Luk.* xviii. 28; *As it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they ſold, they planted, they builded; But the ſame day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained Fire and Brimſtone from Heaven, and deſtroyed them all; Even Thus ſhall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.* And as juſt *Lot* was then delivered from *temporal* Death, by God's immediate miraculous interpoſition; ſo in the infliction of *eternal* Death, it may be depended upon, that *the Judge of all the Earth will do*
Gen. xviii. 23. *what is right*, and will *not deſtroy the righteous with the wicked.* In *This* ſenſe, the plea of *Abraham* was undoubtedly juſt, and will finally be verified without exception; though in the *preſent* mixt ſtate of things, the Nature of God's government of this world is ſuch, that (unleſs in extraordinary caſes, for particular ſtanding examples;) the righteous for the more part are indeed involved in common calamities with the wicked, and the wicked enjoy the Bleſſings of Providence in common with the Righteous.

There have been *ſome* perſons ſo unreaſonable, as, from the general Notion of the Divine *Goodneſs*, to frame to themſelves an imagination, that God ſhould *finally* puniſh no Offenders at all; but, in the *future* ſtate reward thoſe who are capable of it, and deſtroy the reſt immediately without any puniſhment at all. But if Puniſhment is in the *preſent* ſtate, for the ſupport of Laws and of good Government, juſt and righteous; nay, and no leſs conſiſtent with *Goodneſs* too, than requiſite in *Juſtice*: For the ſame reaſon, in the *future* ſtate likewiſe, it is juſt and righteous; nay, and conſiſtent with *Goodneſs* too; For the univerſal Laws and Government and Kingdom of God, continue for ever. In their *own* caſe, when they themſelves are the Parties offended, men always think it reaſonable that Offenders ſhould be puniſhed; nay, and often complain of Providence for not puniſhing them ſooner. And ſhall it not be thought reaſonable in the Government of the Univerſe, that in the future *eternal* ſtate, as well as in the preſent *temporary* one, ſuch Puniſhment ſhould be inflicted on impenitent Offenders, as infinite Power, Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Goodneſs in Conjunction, judges exactly proportional to the demerit of each Criminal, and moſt proper to anſwer the Ends of the divine Government, in ſupporting the Honour and Dignity of the eternal and univerſal Laws of God's boundleſs and everlaſting Kingdom?

III. I proceed now in the *Third* place, to conſider the *Objections* ariſing from *particular* caſes, againſt the *general* Doctrine of the Divine Juſtice.

And *firſt*; That great and *general* Objection, which has in all Ages been drawn from the unequal Diſtributions of Providence in the *preſent* life, is ſufficiently anſwered by the Belief of a *Future ſtate*; wherein, by the exactneſs and preciſe equity of the final Determinations of the great Day, ſhall be abundantly made up all the little Inequalities of this ſhort life, which is but for a moment. Beſides which *general* and full Anſwer, there are alſo many *ſpecial* reaſons of theſe ſeeming Inequalities; which ſhow them to be not only *conſiſtent* with, but even to be beautiful *Parts* of the All-wiſe Deſign of Providence, in governing the World, through all variety of circumſtances with final Equity and exactneſs of Juſtice. God frequently afflicts the Righteous, for the trial and improvement of their virtue; for the exerciſe of their patience; for the correction of their faults; for purging them that they may bring forth more and more fruit. *I will refine them, as ſilver is refined; and will try them as gold is tried*, Zech. xiii. 9. *And ſome of them of underſtanding ſhall fall, to try them and to purge, and to make them white*, Dan. xi. 35; and ch. xii. 10. *Many ſhall be purified and made white and tried. Having been a little chaſtiſed, they ſhall be greatly rewarded; for God proved them, and found them worthy for himſelf: As gold in the furnace has he tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering*, Wiſd. iii. 5. And 1 *Pet.* i. 6, 7. *Ye are in heavineſs through manifold temptations; that the trial of your Faith being much more precious, than of gold that periſheth, though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto praiſe and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt.* On the other
Pſ. lxxiii. hand; God frequently, for no leſs wiſe reaſons, defers puniſhing the wicked; nay,

nay, as the Pſalmiſt complains, makes them remarkably proſperous in the World; Sometimes, to make them inſtruments in the hands of Providence for the Puniſhment of Others; as in the caſe of Tyrants, and publick Oppreſſors: Sometimes, to cauſe their Puniſhment, when it comes finally upon them, to be more exemplary and remarkable; as in the caſe of *Pharoah*, and of thoſe profane perſons, whoſe *End* cleared the Pſalmiſt's mind of thoſe doubts, which their Proſperity had raiſed in him at the *Beginning*: At other Times, God does it to ſhow his Mercy and Forbearance, and to give men time and Space for Repentance; *enduring with much* long-ſuffering *the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction. Therefore*, ſays the Author of the book of *Wiſdom*, *chaſteneſt thou them by little and little, that offend*; —— *that leaving their Wickedneſs, they may believe on Thee*: — *Not that thou waſt unable* — *to deſtroy the ungodly at once*; — *But executing thy judgments upon them by little and little, thou gaveſt them place of repentance*, —— *whereby they might be delivered from their malice*, ch. xii. 2, 9, 10, 20. SERM. XVII. Rom. ix. 22.

But beſides this obvious and *general* Objection againſt the Juſtice of Providence in the diſtribution of *temporal* good things; there are alſo *particular* difficulties ariſing from *ſingular* inequalities even with regard to ſpiritual advantages, which deſerve to be diſtinctly conſidered. Thus, ſince God is the common Creator and Lord of all men; ſince *the Heaven is his, and the earth alſo, with all that therein is*; ſince he declares that he *regardeth not perſons, nor taketh reward*; but *loveth the ſtranger, in giving him food and raiment*; and has promiſed to *judge the* World *with righteouſneſs, and the* Nations *with equity*: Well may it be inquired how is *That which follows* conſiſtent with impartial Juſtice, when in ſo *diſtinguiſhing* a manner, in the very ſame place which ſome of theſe *general* declarations are made; 'tis ſaid to the *Jews in particular*, ver. 15, *Only the Lord had a delight in thy Fathers to love them, and he choſe their ſeed after them, even* you *above all people*: He *did not deal ſo with any other nation, neither had the Heathen knowledge of his Laws*. And all This, not for any *merit* in the perſons themſelves; For he ſaith, *Rom.* ix. 11. concerning *children not yet born, neither having done any good or evil*; — *Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated*; that is, (as the Apoſtle himſelf explains it,) *the Elder ſhall ſerve the Younger*; the *Poſterity* of *Jacob* have I choſen to be my peculiar people, and not the *Poſterity* of *Eſau*. Now the true Anſwer to this difficulty, is This. As God may very juſtly exerciſe his Power and Wiſdom in making great Variety of Creatures, and was not at all obliged to make *Men Angels*: ſo neither is he obliged to indue all *Men* with all the *ſame* Faculties and Advantages; to make them *all* capable of the very *ſame Kind* and *Degree* of Happineſs; or to afford *all of them* all the very *ſame* means and opportunities of obtaining it. *Impartial Juſtice* conſiſts, not in dealing with all perſons *alike*, but in dealing with all perſons *proportionably*. And *Wiſdom* appears even much *more*, in that diverſity of diſtributions; which at the ſame time diminiſhes nothing from Juſtice. 'Tis as juſt with God to intruſt one man originally with two talents, as another with ten; And he that with the improvement of thoſe two talents gains to himſelf two more, has as much Juſtice done him, as he that with the improvement of ten talents gains to himſelf other ten. God divides to every *Man*, and to every *Nation* what Advantages and Favours he himſelf pleaſes, with great Wiſdom, and without any Injuſtice: And when he comes finally to judge the whole Earth, it will appear in that great Variety of Circumſtances in all kinds, that, upon the whole, *he that gathered much, had nothing over, and he that gathered little, had no lack*. This is what the Apoſtle excellently expreſſes, in the whole 2d chapter to the *Romans*; and particularly ver. 6, *God will render to every man according to his deeds*, — *to the* Jew *firſt, and alſo to the* Gentile; *For there is no reſpect of Perſons with God*; *But as many as have ſinned without the Law, ſhall alſo periſh without Law*; *and as many as have ſinned in the Law, ſhall be judged by the Law*, — *in the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt*. But there is alſo, beſides This, another *particular* reaſon of God's different diſpenſations towards the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, expreſſed at large by St. *Paul* in Deut. x. 14, 17, 18. Pſ. cxlvii. 20.

the

SERM. XVII.

the 11*th* to the *Romans*, and ſummed up briefly in the following words, ver. 12. and 30. *If the Fall of them* [of the *Jews*] *be the Riches of the World, and the Diminiſhing of them, the Riches of the Gentiles, how much more their Fulneſs?* --- *For as ye* [Gentiles] *in times paſt have not believed God, yet now have obtained mercy through their unbelief*; [the unbelief of the Jews;] *Even ſo have Theſe alſo now not believed, that through your mercy They alſo may obtain mercy*; *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all: O the depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God!*

Again, if it be objected againſt the Impartiality of the Divine Juſtice, that ſince our Saviour declares, if the ſame means had been uſed with the inhabitants of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, that had been uſed towards the cities of the *Jews*, they would have repented; *why* then were not thoſe means offered them? and ſince in the Parable he ſets forth, that ſome worked in the Vineyard much longer than others, *why* then did they receive but all equally a penny? The anſwer to theſe difficulties is plain, both from what has been already ſaid, and from what our Saviour ſuggeſts in the places themſelves. As the inhabitants of *Tyre* and *Sidon* were of a leſs obſtinate diſpoſition, than ſome of the *Jewiſh* Cities; ſo he declares it ſhould fare proportionably better with them at the day of Judgment: *I ſay unto you; it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you:* And elſewhere; *Many* (ſays he) *ſhall come from the eaſt and from the weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God; and ye yourſelves (the children of the Kingdom) ſhall be ſhut out into outer darkneſs.* Then as to the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard; if it be underſtood of the different Ages of the *World*, concerning the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as 'tis plain it was *primarily* meant; there is then no difficulty in it. But if it be underſtood of the different periods of mens *lives* (as it *may* alſo be;) yet ſtill the penny given equally to them all, may be underſtood of *Heaven in general*, not excluſive of very different degrees *in* that One ſtate of Happineſs which ſhall itſelf in the whole be common to them all. Or laſtly, If the penny given to them that came in in the laſt period of their lives, were to be underſtood even of an equality in *degree* with thoſe who came in firſt; yet even *ſtill* there would be no injuſtice in this matter; becauſe God may do what he pleaſes with the abundance of what is his own, and wrongs no man by giving to others his free and undeſerved Gifts. Nevertheleſs, though God *may juſtly* act in theſe caſes as he pleaſes, without giving *us* any reaſon of his acting; yet in reality, 'tis moſt reaſonable to ſuppoſe he never *does* act arbitrarily, without a reaſon which *he* ſees, though we do *not*. To Him that ſees the *Heart*, a true Penitent, even after many and long tranſgreſſions, may poſſibly come to *exceed* in Virtue, even thoſe who have from the Beginning lived more regularly and innocently. The antient *Jews* had a Proverb, that no man could equal the Zeal of a ſincere Penitent; and St. *Paul*'s deſcription of ſuch a perſon is very emphatical, 2 *Cor.* vii. 11. *Behold, this ſelf-ſame thing, that ye ſorrowed after a godly ſort, what carefulneſs it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourſelves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement deſire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge!*

Luk. x. 13. Mat. xi. 21. Mat. xx. Mat. xi. 22.

The *Uſes* of this whole Diſcourſe concerning the Juſtice of God, are;

1. Let us acknowledge and ſubmit to the Divine Juſtice, and ſhow forth our due Senſe and Fear of it in the courſe of our Lives. This is St. *Peter*'s inference, 1 *Pet.* i. 17. *If ye call on the Father, who without reſpect of Perſons judgeth according to every man's work; paſs the time of your ſojourning here in Fear.*

2. A right Notion of the Juſtice of God is matter of *Comfort* to *good* men; who, if they ſincerely endeavour to perform their duty, know that with a juſt and righteous God there can be no ſecret Decree to exclude them from Happineſs. *God is not* unrighteous, (ſo the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *Heb.* vi. 10.) *to forget your work, and labour of love.* Wherefore however dark the ways of Providence may ſeem at preſent, yet *Let not thine heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long; For ſurely there is a reward, and thine expectation ſhall not be cut off,* Prov. xxiii. 17.

3. The Juſtice of God is matter of *Terrour* to all *wicked* and *unrighteous* men, how *great and powerful* ſoever they may be. He *accepteth not the perſons of Princes, nor regardeth*

SERM. XVII.

gardeth the rich more than the poor; for they All are the work of his hands, Job xxiv. 19; *He which is Lord over all, ſhall fear no man's perſon, neither ſhall he ſtand in awe of any man's greatneſs; for he hath made the ſmall and great, and careth for all alike,* Wiſd. vi. 7. And *Rev.* vi. 15. *The Kings of the Earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, —— hid themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, —— from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.*

4. From the conſideration of the Juſtice of God, who has Power freely to forgive, and puniſhes None but where the higheſt *Reaſon* requires it, ariſes a True Notion of the heinouſneſs of Sin, and of the inexcuſableneſs and ſelf-condemnation of ſinners; *who knowing the* righteous *judgment of God, that they who do ſuch things are* worthy *of death, not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them.*

Laſtly, and to conclude; If God, who is All-powerful and Truly Supreme, and Accountable to None for what he does, yet always confines himſelf to what is juſt and righteous, and appeals even to *Us* alſo, to judge of his ſo doing; ſaying, *Judge, I pray you, between Me and my Vineyard*; how then dare mortal men inſult and tyrannize over each other, and think themſelves by Power and Force diſcharged from all obligations of Equity towards their Fellow-creatures? *Be wiſe now therefore, O ye Kings,* ſays the experienced Preacher *Solomon, be inſtructed, ye that are Judges of the Earth.*

SERMON XVIII.

Of the GLORY of GOD.

1 COR. x. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

SERM. XVIII.

THE Design of the Apostle in this chapter, is to press upon Christians the great Obligation they are under, to walk *worthy of their holy vocation*; to walk *worthy of* God, as he elsewhere expresses it, (1 *Th.* ii. 12.) to live as becometh *the Gospel of Christ*; to behave themselves in such a manner, as may do *honour* to their religion, may give *Credit and Reputation* to their Profession; In a word, that they be sollicitous above all things to promote the *Glory of God*, and the *Salvation of Men*; to bring over *Unbelievers* to the acknowledgment of the Truth; and to prevent, as far as possible, those who *Do believe*, from being in any manner offended and discouraged in their Duty, or by any means tempted and seduced into Sin.

The Great Temptation in the Apostles days was that of relapsing into the Heathen Idolatry; either *directly*, into the gross Acts of this Sin, through Fear of Persecution; or *consequentially*, into the Snare of a defiled Conscience, by presumptuously misunderstanding the true Bounds of what was lawful and innocent. Against

gainſt *Both* theſe, St. *Paul* gives diligent Caution in This chapter. Againſt falling into *direct* Idolatry through fear of Perſecution, he exhorts the *Corinthians* by the following Argument, *ver.* 13. *There has no Temptation*, ſays he, *taken you, but ſuch as is common to Man: But God is Faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it: Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from Idolatry.* To ſtrengthen which Argument, he proceeds in the *next* Verſes, to repreſent to them the *Greatneſs* of the Sin; by ſhowing them diſtinctly, under a plain and obvious Similitude, what *Idolatry* was. *Ver.* 15. *I ſpeak*, ſaith he, *as to Wiſe men; judge ye what I ſay.* He does not inſiſt merely upon his own *Authority*, though it was no leſs than Apoſtolical, as Others, who have no ſuch Claim, are frequently too apt to do: He does not require of them to ſubmit implicitly to what he ſays, without firſt conſidering whether it was right or no: But he exhorts them to make uſe of their own Reaſon and Underſtanding: *I ſpeak*, ſays he, *as to Wiſe* (that is,) to *Senſible and Reaſonable* Men; *Judge ye what I ſay:* Conſider, if what I now propoſe to you, be not a reaſonable and concluſive Argument. *The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Chriſt?* that is, is it not a profeſſing ourſelves to be Diſciples of *Chriſt*? to be *Members* of his *Body*? ver. 16. *For we*, ſays he, *being Many, are one Bread and one Body.* In like manner, he ſpeaks of *Iſrael after the fleſh, Are not they which eat of the Sacrifices partakers of the Altar?* that is, is not This a declaring themſelves to be Diſciples of *Moſes?* ver. 18. By the ſame Argument therefore; being *partakers*, ſaith he, *of the Table of Devils*, by eating of the Sacrifices in the Idol-Temple, *ver.* 21; is in reality to communicate in the Guilt of the Heathen-Idolatry.

Againſt the *next* danger, *viz.* that of falling *conſequentially* into the Snare of a defiled Conſcience, by preſumptuouſly miſunderſtanding the true Bounds of what was lawful and innocent; Againſt *This*, he cautions them in the remaining part of the chapter. An *Idol*, every well inſtructed Chriſtian knew to be *Nothing in the World:* As to *Meats* therefore offered in ſacrifice to Idols; the *good Creatures of God* could not be defiled by the imaginary Superſtitions of *vain Men.* And therefore Chriſtians, provided *They themſelves* bore no part in the Heathen-*worſhip*, were not obliged to make any Inquiry whether Meats ſold in the Markets, or ſet before them at any Friend's houſe, had by *Others* been dedicated to Superſtitious Uſe, *ver.* 25, 27. Nevertheleſs, though as to Thoſe who *had* this Underſtanding, the Matter was clear; yet, if any *ſcrupulous and weaker* Brother was diſſatisfied as to the Lawfulneſs of this Practice, in *ſuch caſe* they were bound to abſtain: Bound, not by any obligation upon their *own* Conſcience, but out of Tenderneſs and Regard to *His*, ver. 28, 29. leſt by *Their* needleſly doing what was innocent to *Themſelves*, *He* ſhould be incouraged to do the ſame thing which was *not* innocent to *Him:* In which caſe, it was much more *material*, and of *greater importance to the Honour of Religion*, that they ſhould *avoid* offending his *Conſcience*, than that they ſhould unſeaſonably aſſert *their* own *Liberty.* Ver. 23. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* The Meaning is; All things that are *lawful for a Man to do*, 'tis not conſequently for the Intereſt of Religion that he *ſhould do* them, if it ſo happens that *other* Mens Conſciences be not therein ſatisfied as well as his *own.* For *That* is moſt for the True intereſt of Religion, which tends moſt towards making all men act with a good conſcience. *Ver.* 24. *Let no man* therefore *ſeek his own, but every Man another's Wealth:* That is; be not ſo much ſollicitous to keep up the full Extent of your own innocent Liberty, as to do That which will more generally and effectually prevent Men's falling into Sin. This ought always to be the main End, the great and prevailing conſideration, in every Action of a good Chriſtian; *what* will moſt tend to promote the kingdom of God, the Practice of univerſal Righteouſneſs and Truth amongſt Men. In order to *This* End, it is not indeed Lawful to do any thing that is *Evil*, but it is at any time very commendable to forbear doing what is *innocent.* *This* End, all our *Great and Religious* Actions ought always *actually and directly* to aim at; and all our *ſmaller and indifferent* Actions, ought by a *general and habitual* intention, to have the ſame Tendency. For ſo the Apoſtle concludes his *whole* Diſcourſe

SERM. XVIII.

course, in the words of the Text; *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do All to the Glory of God: Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of Many, that they may be saved.*

The words of the Text contain a Doctrine of the highest importance in Religion; and therefore, in the following Discourse upon them, I shall more largely and distinctly consider; *1st*, What is the true meaning, and full Intent, of that Phrase which we so often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God:* And *2dly*, What it is, that is required of men in Practice, in order to their satisfying the Precept in the Text; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do All to the Glory of God.*

I. As to the true meaning of that Phrase which we so often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God:* 'Tis to be observed that the

1st and original Signification of it, is to denote to us the *Essence*, the *Person*, or the *Majesty* of God; that is, *God himself*, who is the *Fountain of Glory*. Thus 2 *Pet.* i. 17. *There came to him*, (to our Saviour at his Baptism,) *such a Voice from the* Excellent Glory: From the *Excellent Glory*; that is, from *God*, his *Father*; as 'tis literally expressed, in the very same Verse. In *This* sense, the Name *of God*, the *Majesty on High*, and some other such Phrases, are also used in the like manner, to signify *God himself*. And, *sitting on the right hand of* Power, Matt. xxvi. 64. is, sitting at the right hand of *God*, who Alone has properly *All Power*.

2dly, This phrase, *the Glory of God*, signifies in the *next* place, the Manifestation of God's Perfections or Attributes by the *external Exercise* of them towards his *Creatures*. God was essentially Happy before any thing was created, in the enjoyment of his own unspeakable Perfections: But the *Manifestation* of the Glory of those Perfections, and the *Communication* of Good to *Others*, could not be till the Creation of Things. Hence the Prophet *Isaiah* represents God Thus speaking, (*ch.* xliii. 7.) *I have created him* for my Glory, *I have formed him, yea I have made him.* In *Allusion* to which expression it may probably be supposed to be, that St. *Paul* says, 1 *Cor.* xi. 7. that *Man is the Image and* Glory *of God.*

And because in *every one* of the divine Perfections *in particular*, when manifested *singly* in their proper and respective Acts, there is something *distinctly* worthy of Adoration and Praise; 'tis therefore not unfrequent in Scripture to express any *one* of those Perfections singly, by the Title of the *Glory of God*. Thus concerning the Divine Power, *Ps.* xix. 1. *The Heavens declare the* Glory *of God*, (that is, they show forth unto Men the *Power* of God in *creating*, and his *Wisdom* in *disposing* things) *and the Firmament sheweth his handy-work.* And *Joh.* xi. 4, 40. *This Sickness* of Lazarus, saith our Lord, *is not unto Death, but for the* Glory *of God*, —— that *thou shouldest see the* Glory *of God* — *and that the* Son of God *might be* glorified *thereby:* The Meaning is; It was intended for a manifestation of God's *Power* to raise the dead, and of his having *communicated* That Power also to the *Son of Man*. And here we may observe, by the way, that the Tyranny indeed of *weak and vain Mortals*, is apt to take pleasure in *Power* for *Power's sake*; and their great Complacency and *Glory* is, in being able to exercise it arbitrarily and without reason. But *God*, whose Power is truly *infinite*, makes it His *Glory* to exercise Power, *only in doing Good*; (for almost *all* our Saviour's Miracles were Acts of *Beneficence*, as well as of *Power*;) or at least, if the Subject is not capable of *Good*, yet the Exercise of his Power, even in Acts of *Severity*, is according to *Justice* always. *Rom.* ix. 22. *What if God, willing —— to make his* Power *known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of Wrath fitted to destruction!* He did not show his absolute *Power*, in *fitting* a certain Number of men *to destruction*; as Some have absurdly understood this Text, directly contrary to the words themselves; but he showed his *Power* in *justly* punishing Those, who after *much long-suffering* and forbearance with them, appeared finally *fit* for nothing but *Destruction.*

Again:

Again: Becauſe Mercy *and* Goodneſs are repreſented in Scripture, as the Attributes wherein God *chiefly delights*; according to that of St. *James*, ch. ii. 13, *Mercy rejoiceth againſt Judgment*; or, as it is in the Original, *Mercy* glorieth *over Judgment:* therefore *This* alſo is, in a particular and *emphatical* manner, called *the Glory of God*. *Rom.* ix. 23. *That he might make known the Riches of his* Glory, *on the veſſels of Mercy:* And *Epheſ.* iii. 16. *That he would grant you, according to the Riches of his* Glory, *to be ſtrengthened—by his Spirit in the inner man.* SERM. XVIII.

In purſuance of which *ſame* manner of ſpeaking, *Grace* or *Mercy* is by the Evangeliſt called likewiſe the *Glory of* Chriſt; Joh. i. 14. *We beheld his* Glory, *the* Glory *as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace,* (that is, of *Mercy,*) *and Truth.* And even of a *Man*, Prov. xix. 11. *It is his* Glory, ſaith Solomon, *to paſs over a Tranſgreſſion.* And the *Thanks*, which men are bound to return to God for his *free Goodneſs and Compaſſion* towards them, is expreſſed to be accordingly *to the Praiſe of his* Glory; Eph. i. 14. *The redemption of the purchaſed Poſſeſſion, unto the Praiſe of his* Glory. In *This* particular ſenſe is ſometimes meant That general Obſervation, that the *End* to which God directs All his Actions, is *his own* Glory, Rom. xi. 32. *God hath concluded All under Sin, that he might have* Mercy *upon All.* and Gal. iii. 22.

Thus God's *manifeſting* the ſeveral Attributes and Perfections of his Divine Nature, in the *external Exerciſe* of them towards his *Creatures*, is frequently what the Scripture means by the *Glory of God.*

3*dly*, From hence, on the other ſide, the *Return* or *Acknowledgment*, which *Creatures* make again to *God*, for *His* manifeſtations of his Goodneſs to *Them*; is likewiſe in Scripture ſtiled *The Glory of God*, or *Their* giving *Glory to Him.* To *give Glory to God*, is to promote his *Honour* in the World; or to contribute what we can towards keeping up in All men's minds, a juſt *Senſe* of him, and *Regard* towards him.

And This is done, particularly; by *Worſhipping* him, with *conſtant* and perpetually-returning Acts, of ſolemn *publick Devotion*, *Pſ.* xxix. 1. *Give unto the Lord* glory *and ſtrength; give unto the Lord the* glory *due unto his Name*; worſhip *the Lord, in the Beauty of Holineſs.* Thus the *Saints in* Heaven, (Rev. iv. 11.) are repreſented as *worſhipping* God, and ſaying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive* Glory *and Honour and Power; for Thou haſt created all things, and for thy pleaſure they are, and were Created.* And the *Nations of the* Earth are directed accordingly, (ch. xix. 7.) *Fear God, and give* Glory *to him, and worſhip him that made Heaven and Earth.* Which Worſhip becauſe the Heathen World gave to *Others* inſtead of the True God, even to *Gods which did not make the Heaven and the Earth*, as the Prophet deſcribes them; therefore St *Paul* thus charges them, *Rom.* i. 21. that *when they knew God*, yet *they* glorified *him not as God.* Jer. x. 11.

Again: By *Thanks particularly returned for ſpecial Mercies or Benefits received*, by which we profeſs our Senſe of God's being the Author of thoſe Benefits; is the Honour of God promoted among Men, or *Glory* given unto him. Thus (*Luke* xvii. 18.) when of the ten Lepers that were healed, one only, who was a *Samaritan*, was truly Thankful for the Mercy ſhown him; *There are not found*, ſays our Saviour, *that returned to give* Glory *to God, ſave This Stranger.*

Further: *GLORY* is in like manner ſaid to be given to God, by *Acknowledgment of his Government and Supreme Dominion in the World:* Phil. ii. 11. *That every tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the* Glory *of God the Father*; that is, to the *Honour* of *God who exalted him, and who gave him a Name which is above every Name*, by *ſetting him at his own right hand in the Heavenly places.* Thus alſo *Rev.* xi. 13. when great Judgments of God fell upon the idolatrous World, the *remnant* (ſays the Text) *were affrighted, and gave* Glory *to the God of Heaven*; that is, they then acknowledged the True God to be indeed Supreme Governor of the World. For *not acknowledging* of which, but proudly aſſuming to *himſelf* the cauſe of his own Grandeur and Riches, King *Belſhazzar* is thus reproved by *Daniel*, (ch. v. 22.) *Thou, O Belſhazzar, haſt not humbled thine heart, but haſt lifted up thyſelf againſt the Lord of Heaven; and—the*

SERM. XVIII.

God in whose hand thy Breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. And King *Herod*, when, being *arrayed in royal apparel* he *sat upon his Throne*; *immediately the Angel of the Lord smote him*, Acts xii. 23. *because he gave not God the* Glory; that is, because forgetting his dependance upon God, he suffered the People to applaud him as being *himself* a *God*, and the Author of his own Greatness.

Upon the same Ground, *Confession of past Sins*, with true *Humiliation*, and a just Sense of the *Unworthiness* and *Ungratefulness* of Sin, is in Scripture stiled *giving* Glory *to God*. Josh. vii. 19. *Joshua said to Achan*, who had stolen some of the accursed things, and endeavoured to dissemble it; *My Son, give, I pray thee*, glory *to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him:* That is; Acknowledge, that nothing can be concealed from *His* all-seeing Eye; and that to *Him* there is no Secret nor Shadow of Darkness, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves.

Actual Repentance, and *Forsaking* of Sin, by *real Amendment*, is still in a higher degree *giving* Glory *to God*, or promoting his Honour. *Rev.* xvi. 9. *Men blasphemed the Name of God, who hath Power over these plagues; and they* repented *not, to give him* Glory.

Habitual *Holiness*, or a *constant established Practice of* Virtue, *in the course of our Lives*, is yet further, in the *highest* degree we are capable, *giving* Glory *to* the *God* of all Righteousness and Holiness, who is of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity, 1 *Cor.* vi. 20. Glorify *God, in your Body, and in your Spirit: Being filled with the Fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the* Glory *and Praise of God.* (Phil. i. 11.)

Phil. iv. 8.

In a word: *Whatever* tends to the true Honour of Religion, to the promoting and establishment of Virtue and Goodness among Men; *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, these* are the things which promote the *Glory* of God. God is *himself* a Being of infinite Holiness and Goodness; a perfectly just and righteous, as well as Supreme, Governour of the Universe: And the Glory of *such* a Governour, is the establishment of his *Moral Kingdom*, the universal establishment of the *Dominion and Power of Virtue*, in the Wills of all reasonable and intelligent Creatures. His *natural* Kingdom is by *Necessity*; for the material World *cannot but* obey him: But his *moral* Kingdom which is his *greatest Glory*, is the Dominion of *Righteousness* and *Virtue*. Hence the Apostles, in their Exhortations to the Practice of *Any Virtue* whatsoever, frequently urge *This* Argument, that it will be *to the Glory of God:* (Rom. xv. 5.) *God*----- *grant you to be* like-minded *one towards another*, —*that ye may* with one mind glorifie *God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And in the words of the Text; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the* glory *of God:* Do every thing, even the most *common* actions of Life, in such a manner as may *become* the Professors of the Gospel of Christ, and may promote the Honour and Interest of Religion. The words are of the same import, with those in *Col.* iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*; do every thing so as becomes the disciples of Christ, *giving Thanks to God, even the Father, by Him*; that *God in* all *things may be* glorified, *through Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. iv. 11; or as 'tis expressed, *Tit.* ii. 10. that ye may adorn *the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.* To *adorn* the Doctrine of God is, by your Practice to cause it to appear *lovely* and *beneficial* to mankind; to show how *glorious* 'tis in its Effects, and how *worthy* to be embraced, and practised by all men. This is what the Scripture elsewhere calls, glorifying *the* word *of the Lord*, Acts xiii. 48; *glorifying it*, and causing it to *have its* free course; so St. *Paul* explains it, 2 *Th.* iii. 1. 'Tis promoting the interest of Religion and Virtue, and the general Salvation of Men; 'Tis spreading the *Knowledge* of God, and bringing men over to the *Obedience* of his Commands, in order to their becoming capable of being Partakers of his *Happiness*. Which *Happiness and Perfection* of rational Creatures, being the great *End and Design* of God's Creation, and what both Nature and Scripture calls the Kingdom *of God*; therefore *whatever* tends to the promoting of Virtue and True Religion in the World, is promoting the Honour

and

and the Glory of God. When Many of the Jews, convinced by our Saviour's Miracles, embraced the Truth of his Doctrine: the Scripture thus expreſſes it, *Matt.* xv. 31. that they glorified *the God of Iſrael.* When our Saviour promiſes his Diſciples, for the further confirmation and eſtabliſhment of their Faith, that God would certainly grant them the Petitions they ſhould rightly put up in his Name; he does it in the following manner, *that the Father*, ſays he, *may be* glorified *in the Son*, Joh. xiv. 13. In the 21ſt chapter of the ſame Goſpel, *ver.* 19; becauſe the Teſtimony and the Sufferings of the Martyrs, are one of the principal Means of propagating the True Religion, therefore our Saviour's foretelling in what manner St. *Peter* ſhould *die*, is by the Evangeliſt thus expreſt, that our Lord *ſignified by what Death Peter ſhould* glorify God. For the ſame reaſon, the Spreading of the Knowledge of the True God among the Nations of the World, is by the Prophet called, *ſetting his* Glory *among the Heathen*, Ezek. xxxix. 21. And becauſe Nothing does This more effectually, than the virtuous *Lives*, and good *Examples* of thoſe who profeſs the Truth; therefore the Apoſtle tells the *Corinthians*, (2 Cor. iv. 15.) that *the abundant grace* which was in them, did, *thro' the thankſgiving of Many, redound to the* Glory of God. And our Saviour, exhorting his Diſciples to be bright Examples of Virtue to the World, does it in this manner, (Matt. v. 16.) *Let your Light*, ſays he, *ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your good works, and* glorify *your Father which is in Heaven.*

All that has been ſaid upon This Head concerning the *Glory of God*, is ſtill further confirmed by the conſideration of the Contrary, what is meant by the *Diſhonour of God.* Literally and ſtrictly ſpeaking, 'tis evident God *cannot be diſhonoured*, becauſe his eſſential *Honour* or Glory is *immutable.* But as the *promoting* of *Virtue and Righteouſneſs*, is *glorifying God*; ſo the bringing any *Reproach* upon *Religion and Goodneſs*, is *diſhonouring of God*, who is the Author of true Religion and the Fountain of Goodneſs. Thus, under the *Old* Teſtament, the Wickedneſs of *Eli*'s Sons, [1 *Sam.* ii. 17.] cauſed *men to* abhor *the offering of the Lord.* And the Sin of *David*, (2 *Sam.* xii. 14.) gave *great occaſion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme.* Upon This ground, *Nehemiah* thus exhorts the Jews at their return from the captivity, (ch. v. 9.) *Ought ye not to walk in the Fear of our God, becauſe of the* Reproach *of the Heathen our Enemies?* And God complains by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. lii. 5. *They that rule over* my people, oppreſs *them, ſaith the Lord, and* my Name *continually every day is* blaſphemed. And again, by *Ezekiel*, ch. xxxvi. 20. *When they entred unto the Heathen whither they went, they* profaned my Holy Name, *when they ſaid Theſe are the people of the Lord.*

In the *New* Teſtament, the ſame Argument is urged by St. *Paul*, *Rom.* ii. 23. *Through breaking the Law*, diſhonoureſt *thou God? For the Name of God is* blaſphemed *among the Gentiles, through You as it is written.* And in his *particular Directions* to perſons in *particular Stations*, his exhortation to *young* women is, that by ſober converſation they *give none occaſion to the Adverſary to ſpeak reproachfully*, 1 Tim. v. 14: and that they be *chaſte* and *diſcreet, that the word of God be not blaſphemed:* Tit. ii. 5. And to *young* men, ver. 8. that by their *uncorruptneſs, gravity* and *ſincerity, he that is of the contrary part may be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of them.* And to *Servants*, that they behave themſelves well towards their Maſters, *that the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blaſphemed*, (1 *Tim.* vi. 1.)

Thus have I briefly explained what is in Scripture meant by This phraſe, *The Glory of God*, and our *giving glory* to him. 'Tis promoting the intereſt of *True Virtue and Righteouſneſs* in the World. For as the natural *Kingdom of God* over the *inanimate* Creation, conſiſts in his Exerciſe of *Power and Wiſdom*; ſo the ſpiritual *Kingdom of God* over the *rational* World, conſiſts in the *Obedience of the Wills* of reaſonable Creatures to the *moral and eternal Laws of Righteouſneſs:* And the *Glory of God*, as of *every Good Governour in Proportion*, is the *Goodneſs and Happineſs of his Subjects.* When therefore we ſay that God *does every thing for his own Glory*, and that This is his *Ultimate End*; the meaning is, that his Deſign in all things is the final eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom of univerſal *Righteouſneſs* in the

SERM. XVIII.

the whole Creation. And accordingly when a Man does any Action *becauſe* it is *good and right*, or *forbears* it *becauſe* it is *evil and immoral*; *then* only, and not when he acts upon any *enthuſiaſtick* principles, does he truly *intend the Glory of God*.

This in *General*. I ſhould now have proceeded in the 2*d* place, to ſhow *more particularly*, what it is that is required of men in Practice, in order to their ſatisfying the Precept in the Text, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God*. But This, hereafter.

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

Of the GLORY of GOD.

1 COR. x. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

SERM. XIX.

IN Discourſing upon theſe words, I have propoſed to conſider, *1ſt*, what is the True Meaning, and full Intent, of that Phraſe which we ſo often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God:* And *2dly*, What it is, that is required of Men in Practice, in order to their ſatisfying the Precept in the Text.

I. As to This Phraſe, which we ſo often meet withal in Scripture, *The Glory of God*; I have ſhown, that it denotes, in its *1ſt* and original Signification, the *Eſſence*, the *Perſon*, or the *Majeſty* of God; that is, *God Himſelf*, who is the *Fountain of Glory*. *2dly*, It ſignifies the *Manifeſtation* of God's Perfections or Attributes, in the *external Exerciſe* of them towards his *Creatures*. And from hence, *3dly*, on the *other* ſide, the *Return* or *Acknowledgment*, which *Creatures* make again to *God*, for *His* manifeſtations of his Goodneſs to *Them*, is likewiſe in Scripture ſtiled, *The Glory of God*, or *Their* giving *Glory to Him*.

Thus far I have *already* proceeded *in general*. That which *Now* remains, is,

II. To conſider diſtinctly and *particularly*, in the ſeveral Caſes and Circumſtances of Life, *what* it is that is required of men in Practice, in order to their ſatisfying the Precept in the Text; *whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.*

SERM. XIX.

And *1ſt*, He who will in all things promote the *Glory* of *God*, muſt in the firſt place ſhow forth the Senſe he has of God upon his Mind, by *Acts immediately and directly religious*; by *ſuch* Acts, as are *Profeſſed Acknowledgments* of *our* own Dependence upon God, and *exemplary* to provoke other men, (as the Apoſtle elegantly expreſſes it, *Heb.* x. 24.) *unto Love and to good Works*. Of this Kind are *publick Prayer* and *Thankſgiving*: Pſ. cvii. 31. *O that men would therefore praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and* declare *the Wonders that he doth for the Children of Men! That they would exalt him alſo in the Congregation of the people, and praiſe him in the Seat of the Elders!* By this *publick* Worſhip of God, are made the propereſt *Expreſſions* of the Senſe we have of our Dependence upon him; and by this manner of Expreſſing it, is That *Senſe itſelf*, the Senſe of God and of Religion upon the Minds of Men, moſt effectually kept up and preſerved. Very emphatical is the Deſcription St. *John* gives us, of the whole Univerſe joining in their ſeveral Capacities, to give *Glory* in This manner to their Common Lord; *Rev.* v. 13. *Every Creature, which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and ſuch as are in the Sea, and All that are in them heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the Throne.*

2dly, He who, according to the Direction in the Text, will do all things to the *Glory of God*; as he muſt be conſtant in *Acts immediately and directly religious*, ſo he muſt reſolve againſt being at Any time guilty of *Any Action* which is *directly irreligious*. Of This Kind, is *every deliberate Sin*, every Act which is *againſt a man's own Conſcience*, every *known Tranſgreſſion of a Commandment*. Which things whoſoever is at any time guilty of; far from *doing all to the Glory of God*, he on the contrary, as much as in him lies, *diſhonours* and reproaches him. For wilful Sin, ſinning *preſumptuouſly* or *with a high hand*, (as the Scripture expreſſes it;) is in the Nature of Things a *Diſhonour* to God: *Rom.* ii. 23. *Thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the Law, through breaking the Law* diſhonoureſt *thou God?* 'Tis *reproaching* the Lord; or contending, in effect, that his Commandments are not wiſe, juſt, and good: *Num.* xv. 30. *The Soul that doth ought preſumptuouſly, the ſame* reproacheth *the Lord, and that Soul ſhall be cut off from among his people.* 'Tis caſting *Contempt* upon his Laws; *If.* v. 24. They have caſt away *the Law of the Lord of Hoſts, and* deſpiſed *the word of the Holy One of Iſrael.* 'Tis *defying* his *Power*; 1 Cor. x. 22. *Do we* provoke *the Lord to jealouſy? are we* ſtronger *than He?* In a word; 'tis profeſſing that we know better what is right and fit for us *our ſelves*, than *he* can judge for us; and therefore that *we will not have* Him *to reign over us*. This is the caſe of preſumptuous Sins; of all Actions, known to be directly and in their own nature *irreligious*.

But, not only by Actions *intrinſically* and *in their own* Nature immoral, is God diſhonoured; but alſo by every thing, which in its *Circumſtances* is Evil; by every Act, which either the *Perſon who commits* it, *judges* to be unlawful: or which needleſly gives *Offence* to *Others*, and becomes to *Them* the Cauſe or the Occaſion of Sin. For, the Kingdom of God conſiſting in the Prevalency of univerſal Righteouſneſs, Sincerity, and Truth; it follows, that not only by the Practice of whatever is *intrinſically immoral*, but alſo by whatever *wounds and defiles the conſcience* either of him who does the Action, or of Others who by the Example of it are led into the Commiſſion of what to Them is Sin; by *every* ſuch thing is God's Kingdom of Righteouſneſs diminiſhed, and the Dominion of Virtue over the Hearts and Wills of Men, (which is the *Glory* and the *Delight* of God) is weakened and impaired. For whoever does any thing with a Senſe or Judgment in his own mind of its being unlawful when he does it; however otherwiſe the Act might poſſibly have been innocent in its own Nature; yet he ſins at That time againſt his own *Conſcience*, and conſequently againſt *God*. And whoever does any thing with a probable Knowledge or Expectation, that his doing it will be a means of deceiving or tempting his *Neighbour* into Sin; however otherwiſe the Action might have been not only innocent *in itſelf*, but innocent alſo to *Him*, becauſe he *knew* it to be ſo; yet in This caſe, by Uncharitableneſs, he ſins againſt his *Brother*, and conſequently againſt *God*. For, ſince the promoting of Virtue and Goodneſs in the World, is the moſt important of all things; it becomes us at all times, and in all our Actions, to look upon it as our main End. And tho' the *Perverſeneſs* of *malicious* perſons, who are apt to *miſrepreſent* things, is by no

means

means an Obligation upon any Good man to forbear doing any thing that he *himself* knows to be innocent; yet the *Weakneſs* of *ſincere* and *well-meaning* perſons, who by relying upon *His* Example might be led to do what would in *Them* be Sin, is a very ſtrong reaſon, (unleſs he has otherwiſe ſome *Great* Occaſion or Neceſſity of Acting,) it is (I ſay) in point of *Charity* a very ſtrong reaſon, why he ſhould forbear doing that which would be ſo hurtful to *Them*. Where the thing that gives Offence to Others, and either drives or leads them into Sin is ſuch, as not only upon account of this *Circumſtance* or *Conſequence*, but *intrinſically* alſo and *in its own Nature* is *unlawful*; there the Scripture denounces againſt the Offender the utmoſt *Severity* of Woe, as againſt a preſumptuous Diſhonourer of God: *Matt.* xviii. 6. *Whoſo ſhall* offend *one of theſe little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea: Woe unto the World, becauſe of Offences; for it muſt needs be that Offences come, but Woe to that man by whom the Offence cometh.* But where the thing done is innocent in itſelf, and only by accidental *conſequence* proves an occaſion of Sin to Others; yet even There, he who foreſees this conſequence and takes not care to prevent it; is in Scripture charged with *Uncharitableneſs* towards the Soul of his *Brother*, if it be a *Fellow-chriſtian* whom he ſo cauſes to offend; or with want of true Concern for the *Glory of God*, if the Offence be given to an *Unbeliever*.

SERM. XIX.

As to the Caſe of *Unbelievers*; the Apoſtle thus exhorts, 1 *Pet.* ii. 12. *Have your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles; that —— they may by your good works which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the day of Viſitation.* Again, 2 *Cor.* viii. 21. *Provide for honeſt things*, (that is, things of *good reputation* as well as lawful,) *not only in the ſight of the Lord, but alſo in the ſight of men. Abſtain from all* Appearance *of Evil*, 1 Th. v. 22. *Provide things honeſt*, that is, reputable, *in the ſight of all men*, Rom. xii. 17. *Walk honeſtly towards them that are without.* 1 Th. iv. 12. *Honeſtly*, that is, *wiſely, circumſpectly*, ſo as to afford them *no Objection againſt your religion*; Thus the ſame Apoſtle explains himſelf, *Col.* iv. 5. *Walk in* Wiſdom *towards them that are without.*

As to the caſe of *Fellow-chriſtians*; how the *Glory of God* is to be promoted by our behaviour towards *Them*; by our taking care to avoid even ſuch *innocent* things, as we ſee likely to lead any of *Them* into Sin, and may be forborn without any *great* inconvenience to *Ourſelves*; the Apoſtle explains himſelf at large, by putting a particular and very remarkable inſtance, in the *chapter whereof my Text is a part*; and in the *eighth chapter of This Epiſtle*; and in the *fourteenth chapter to the* Romans.

The Caſe he puts, is, whether it was lawful for Chriſtians to eat of ſuch meats, as the Heathen had ſacrificed to their Idols. In the *preſent chapter*, whereof my Text is a part, he thus reſolves the queſtion, *ver.* 25, 27. *Whatſoever is ſold in the ſhambles, or ſet before you at a friend's houſe, That eat, asking no queſtion for conſcience ſake*; i. e. Care not, whether the Heathens have ſuperſtitiouſly offered it to their Idols or not; *For the Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulneſs thereof*; ver. 26. The Meaning is; *God* made *all* things, and every creature of His is good, if it be received with Thankſgiving; nor can any man's Folly and Superſtition make That to be *unclean* which God has made *clean* to us. *But if any man* ſay *unto you, This is offered in ſacrifice unto Idols*, ver. 28. *then eat* not, *for* his *ſake that ſhewed it*; that is, *forbear* Then, *out of charity to* Him, leſt *Your* Liberty cauſe *Him* to ſtrain his Conſcience, and ſo fall into Sin. And then he ſums up all in the words of the Text, *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God: Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.*

In the *eighth chapter* of this epiſtle, he again propoſes and reſolves the *ſame* queſtion: Ver. 4. *As concerning the eating things offered in Sacrifice unto Idols, we know that an Idol is nothing in the World, and that there is none Other God, but One. Howbeit,* ſaith he, ver. 7. *there is not in every man That knowledge: For ſome with conſcience of the Idol unto this hour, eat it* as *a thing offered unto an Idol; and their Conſcience, being weak, is defiled.* Wherefore, though in reality, and to a man of underſtanding, the good creatures of God are not at all the worſe, for having by other mens vain and ſenſeleſs ſuperſtition been offered to an Idol; yet *take heed,* ſays the Apoſtle,

SERM. XIX.

Apoſtle, ver. 9. *leſt by any means this Liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak: For if any man ſee Thee which haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the Idols temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him that is weak, be emboldened,* (in the original it is expreſſed very emphatically, *ſhall he not be* edified,) *to eat thoſe things which are offered to Idols? And through* Thy *knowledge, ſhall thy weak-Brother periſh, for whom Chriſt died.* And then he concludes, *ver.* 12. *When ye ſin ſo againſt the Brethren, and wound their weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt: Wherefore if Meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the World ſtandeth, leſt I make my Brother to offend.*

Laſtly, The *ſame* queſtion he again determines, in the *fourteenth chapter* to the *Romans*: *I know,* ſaith he, ver. 14. *and am perſwaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of itſelf; but to him that* eſteemeth *any thing to be unclean, to Him it is unclean: But if thy Brother be grieved with thy meat, Now thou walkeſt not* charitably: ——*All things indeed are pure, but 'tis evil for that man who eateth with offence: It is good* therefore, *neither to eat fleſh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy Brother ſtumbleth, or is made weak: Haſt thou Faith? have it to thyſelf before God.* His meaning, in theſe *laſt* words, is; not, (as ſome have wickedly perverted the words, (that provided a man has right notions of religion *himſelf*, he need not openly own and profeſs them before *Others:* But his meaning is, that in things of an *indifferent* nature, (of *which only* he was here ſpeaking, men of underſtanding had better keep *to themſelves* their lawful Liberty, than run the hazard of incouraging *others* to venture further than their Conſciences will innocently permit them. *Haſt thou Faith?* i. e. haſt thou *aſſurance* of the innocency of what thou doſt? *have it to thyſelf before God.*

The Sum is This: To *do* any *Evil Action,* that *Good* may come of it, is *not lawful:* But to *forbear* any *innocent* action, when ſuch forbearance is the likelieſt means to prevent another man's falling into Sin, is both *lawful* and *commendable.* Nay, the acting otherwiſe, is, in ſuch caſe, *Uncharitableneſs* towards our Brother: *Rom.* xiv. 15. *If thy Brother be* grieved *with thy Meat, Now walkeſt thou* not charitably.

To apply this to *Other* caſes. We affirm, and with great reaſon, that ſuch Uſe of *Images* in religious Worſhip, as the Church of *Rome* injoins, is *direct Idolatry.* But ſuppoſe it were *not*; yet, ſo long as the generality of the people cannot poſſibly pray otherwiſe amongſt them, than *with* Conſcience *of the Idol,* as St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf, 1 *Cor.* viii. 7. 'twould be the greateſt Injuſtice in the world, for *Them* to cauſe their Brethren to periſh, for whom Chriſt died; by impoſing upon them needleſly, and without warrant of Scripture, ſo manifeſt a ſtumbling-block, and ſo evident a cauſe of falling into Sin. And the like may be ſaid in proportion, concerning the Violent and Obſtinate Impoſition of *any* dubious doctrine, or *any* dangerous Ceremony, beyond the original Plainneſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel. 'Tis chuſing to hazard the Salvation of Men, and to cauſe Diviſions, and Strifes, and unneceſſary Difficulties of Conſcience among the Servants of Chriſt, for the ſake of Pride and Vanity and Love of Dominion over men. Whoever is ſincerely deſirous to *do all things to the Glory of God*; as he will be heartily ſorry for all his *own* Sins and Offences, ſo he will really endeavour, as much as in him lies, to prevent the Sins of *Others*; He will avoid every thing, that may lead them into Sin; he will ſet them an example of Virtue, in the Practice of his own life; he will recommend to them in his Diſcourſe, upon all fair and proper occaſions, the excellency and the reaſonableneſs of Religion; he will rejoice and be truly pleaſed, to ſee Virtue, Righteouſneſs, and univerſal Charity, and Goodwill, prevail and proſper in the World; he will lead no man into Error, nor be eaſy to ſee any man continue in it; but will wiſh with *Moſes,* that *all* the Lord's people were Prophets; and contribute, as much as in him lies, towards enabling them to be ſo. And, if he be in Power or Authority, he will deſire not to grieve or burden the Conſciences of Men; but will eſteem it of much more importance to unite Chriſtians in the plain Simplicity of the Goſpel, and in the bonds of Righteouſneſs and true Charity; than to eſtabliſh for Himſelf Any Power or Dominion over the Conſciences of his Brethren, either by preſumptuouſly claiming to himſelf a falſe *ſpiritual* Authority which Chriſt has not given him or antichriſtianly and atheiſtically making uſe of *Temporal Power* to compel or awe men in matters of *Religion.*

Thus

SERM. XIX.

Thus have I briefly explained the Two *Primary* and Great Inſtances, wherein conſiſts a man's *doing All things to the Glory of God.* It implies *firſt*, that he regularly ſhow forth the Senſe he has of God upon his Mind, by *Acts immediately and directly religious*; and *2dly*, that he reſolves againſt being *at* Any *time* guilty of Any *Action* which is *directly* Irreligious. But further,

3dly, In all *great* Actions, Actions of *moment and conſequence* in the main courſe of a man's life; although they be *not* ſuch, as have any direct *relation to* Religion; yet ought he *expreſly* to *intend* the *Glory of God*; as his chief *and* main *end.* He ought to intend the *Glory of God*; that is, the promoting of *Truth and Right, of Juſtice and Goodneſs* in the World. For whatever is *Therefore* choſen, *becauſe* it tends to the promoting of *Virtue and Goodneſs*, is (in the Scripture-ſenſe) done *for the Glory of God:* And whatever is *for That reaſon* avoided, *becauſe* it has, in any manner, a *Tendency to Evil*; is avoided *for the Glory of God.* Now there is no *conſiderable* Action in any man's Life, no Action of *conſequence* and *importance* in the World, but which, even though it has *not any* direct *relation to* Religion, yet ſome way or other has in the whole a Tendency to promote the Cauſe either of Virtue or of Vice. Such is, for inſtance, a man's chooſing his *Profeſſion*, imployment, or manner of Life in the World. Whatever Profeſſion, though *not* in it ſelf directly *unlawful*, yet leads Men needleſly into many and ſtrong *Temptations* to Sin, will always, if poſſible, and if he is not under any *preſſing* neceſſity, be avoided by a Man who is ſincerely deſirous to do all things to the Glory of God. Every *innocent* Profeſſion may *equally* and *indifferently* be choſen by any good Man; But yet, even in *That* Choice, his *main and ultimate* End will be the Exerciſe of Right and Truth, and the mutual comfortable Support of Men, in Juſtice, Faithfulneſs and Charity. Profit, Power, Credit, Reputation, and the like, may very innocently, and very juſtly be aimed at by Men in Any buſineſs or imployment whatſoever: But theſe things muſt Always be deſired with a due Subordination to the Intereſt of Virtue; which is the *Glory of God*, and the only true and final *Happineſs* of *Men.* Whoever, in the great *Lines* and main *Courſe* of his Life, aims meerly or principally at worldly and temporal Ends; in the attainment of Thoſe Ends, he *has his Reward.*

4thly and *Laſtly*; As in all *Great* Actions, a good Chriſtian ought actually; ſo in all even the *ſmalleſt* and moſt *inconſiderable* Actions of Life, he ought habitually to intend the *Glory of God. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* The Scripture repreſents all, even *irrational* and the very *inanimate* creatures, (*Pſ.* cxlviii. 2, &c.) *Beaſts and all cattle, worms and feathered fowls; the Sun, the Moon and Stars; Mountains and all Hills, fruitful Trees and all Cedars; Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Wind and Storms*; The Scripture, I ſay, repreſents even All *Theſe* as *glorifying God*, becauſe they act *regularly*, according to the *Nature* he has given them, and by *his* Command. Much *more* then, may even the moſt *common* actions of *Men* be juſtly ſaid to be *done to the glory of God*; when they are done *decently and ſoberly, regularly and innocently*; as becomes *Men*, and *Chriſtians*, and ſuch as have upon their minds, even when they are not directly thinking of it, an *habitual* Regard to God and Religion. In a *Journey*; to a *diligent* Man, and one whoſe mind is really bent upon his journey's End, *every thing* he does, as well as *actual travelling*, tends truly to the ſame End. His *Reſt* and *Sleep*; his *Stops* and *Refreſhments*, nay even his very *Diverſions and Digreſſions*, ſtill tend uniformly towards enabling him to arrive at his intended Home. And thus likewiſe in the courſe of a Religious Life; to a Man truly and ſincerely Virtuous, every *Action* of his Life promotes the Honour of Religion, which is the Glory of God; and every *thing* he does is ſanctified by a Habit of Virtue: His *worldly buſineſs and imployment*, by *Juſtice and Charity* running uniformly through all the parts of it; The *common* Actions of his Life, by *decency and inoffenſiveneſs*; His very *Pleaſures and Diverſions*, by *Innocency and right Intention.* In a word; whatſoever he is doing, he ſtill Always habitually *remembers the End, and* therefore he *never does amiſs*, Eccluſ. vii. 36.

III. The *Uſes*, which may be drawn by way of Inference from what has been ſaid, are:

SERM. XIX.

1*ſt*, From hence we may learn how *ſevere* a Reproof thoſe perſons juſtly deſerve, who far from doing *all* things, as the Apoſtle directs, *to the Glory of God*, do, on the contrary, by *Profaneneſs*, *Unrighteouſneſs and Debauchery*, directly *diſhonour* Him whom they profeſs to ſerve; bringing a *Reproach and Infamy* upon our moſt Holy Religion, and cauſing the Name of God and the Doctrine of Chriſt to be through *Their* means *blaſphemed* among Unbelievers.

2*dly*, Thoſe deſerve in the *next* place to be rebuked ſharply, who, though they do not diſhonour God by Acts directly *irreligious*, yet are *careleſs and negligent* in matters of Religion; not much regarding whether *Truth* or *Errour* prevails in the World; nor being ſollicitous to do *honour* to their religion, and to promote the *ſpreading* of the Doctrine of Chriſt by ſhowing the *reaſonableneſs* of it, by preſerving the Simplicity and *Purity* of it, and by exhibiting the *Beauty* of it to all Mankind.

3*dly*, After Theſe, are to be reproved ſuch as *have* indeed a *Zeal* for Religion, but *not according to Knowledge*; placing the main Streſs of Religion in *Forms* and *Ceremonies* unworthy of God; or in *Opinions* and *Notions*, which either through their *obſcurity and unintelligibleneſs*, or by their *diſagreeableneſs* to the *Everlaſting Goſpel*, *to natural Religion and to the Divine Perfections*, hinder, inſtead of promoting, the Glory of God.

4*thly*, Even the *Beſt* of Men have need to be admoniſhed, and to be *put in remembrance*, *that they* ſtir up *the Gift of God that is in them*, 2 Tim. i. 6. That they *purge* themſelves continually from every evil work, *that they may bring forth* more *fruit*, Joh. xv. 2. that they be *more and more diligent* in all their Actions, to do every thing to the Glory of God: Not with a ſuperſtitious Anxiety, or burdenſome Preciſeneſs, in things of little moment; but with a cheerful Application of every thing that occurs in Life to the promoting of Truth and Right, of Reaſon and Virtue among Men. Rejoicing in the Glory of God, and in the eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom of Righteouſneſs; as That wherein conſiſts the Happineſs of the whole Creation, both in This World and in That which is to come.

Laſtly, From hence we may learn to comfort and ſatisfy the minds of ſome *weak* Chriſtians; who, not having a right Notion *What* the Glory of God is, can never aſſure themſelves that they are *True* Promoters of it. They read that *Moſes* prayed to God to blot *Him* out of his book, if thereby the children of *Iſrael* might be ſaved; and that St. *Paul* even *wiſhed* Himſelf *accurſed from Chriſt*, if thereby the Nation of the *Jews* could be converted. And hence *ſome* have put the queſtion to *Themſelves*, and *others* have been ſo weak as to put it in their *Writings*; whether a Chriſtian ought to be *content* to periſh finally, for the Glory of God. The queſtion is abſurd and contradictory; and has *no* foundation in the Texts referred to. *Moſes*, and St. *Paul*, in the circumſtances they were Then in, might charitably, and without any extravagancy, be willing to have born the *temporal* Curſe then coming upon the *Jews*, (which is all that their words mean;) if thereby it could have been poſſible to have ſaved the whole Nation. But ſuch High Expreſſions of Affection are always well underſtood, in *all* books and in *all* languages, to have, not a literal, but a figurative Meaning. A *Chriſtian's* Duty, of doing all things to the *Glory of God*, ſignifies plainly *This only*; that he ought always to prefer the Intereſt of *Religion and Virtue*, before all *Worldly conſiderations* whatſoever. Which that We may All do, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON XX.

Of GOD's being the FATHER of Mankind.

MATT. xxiii. 9.

And call no man your Father upon the Earth; For One is your Father which is in Heaven.

IN the following Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow diſtinctly, 1*ſt*, in what Senſe God is in Scripture uſually ſtiled Our *Father*. 2*dly*, What we are to underſtand, when we find it affirmed of him, that he *is in Heaven*. 3*dly*, What is meant, by *calling any man our Father upon the Earth*. And 4*thly*, Why we are forbidden to *call any man Father on the Earth*, upon account of there being *One which is our Father in Heaven*.

I. In the *Firſt* place; there are *two* Senſes, wherein God is in Scripture uſually ſtiled our *Father*.

1. The *firſt* is, as he is the *Father* or Author of *all things*, by originally *creating* or giving them Being. In *This* Senſe, the wiſeſt of the Antient *Philoſophers* among the *Heathen*, ſtiled God, *the Father of the Univerſe*. And the *Scripture* ſometimes uſes

SERM. XX.

uſes expreſſions of the ſame Nature. Thus when St. *Paul* had declared, 1 *Cor.* viii. 6. that *To Us there is but One God*; he immediately in the very next words gives a Deſcription who That One God is, by adding, *the Father*, of *whom are all things*; that is to ſay, *from* whom all things derive their exiſtence, and are brought into Being by his Will and Power. The like manner of ſpeaking we find again. *Eph.* iv. 6. *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all: Father of all*, that is, Author and Creator of all things. So the word is uſed in the *Creed*, when we declare we believe in God, *the Father Almighty*, or, *the Almighty Father*, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. And This is the utmoſt latitude of ſignification to which the word can poſſibly be extended: it reaching, in *This* ſenſe, to things both *rational* and *irrational*, *animate* and *inanimate*; making God truly and properly, in the fulleſt and moſt literal Senſe, *the Father of the Univerſe*. But *more commonly*, the word is uſed in Scripture in a Senſe ſomewhat more reſtrained, with regard to rational and intelligent Beings; God being peculiarly ſtiled Father, with reſpect to Theſe to whom he has given *Life and Underſtanding*; but Creator *or* Maker only, with reſpect to *inanimate* things, to whom he has communicated only *Simple Being*. Thus *Heb.* xii. 19. The *Father* of *Spirits*: And *Eph.* iii. 15. *The* Father; —— *of whom the whole* Family *in Heaven and Earth is named*. *Father*, and *Family*, are relative Terms; And 'tis a noble Idea, which This Text gives us of God; repreſenting the *whole Univerſe* as the Houſe of God, framed and preſerved by his Power; and all Orders of *intelligent* Beings, as the Family of God, under the Government of his Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Goodneſs, in their ſeveral and reſpective Stations. In *This* ſenſe, *Angels* are ſtiled the *Sons of God*; Job xxxviii. 7. *The morning-ſtars ſang together, and all the* Sons of God *ſhouted for joy*; that is, the *Angels* rejoiced and praiſed God at the time of the creation of the viſible World. And the ſame Aſſembly, who are ſtiled the *Hoſt* of Heaven, 1 *Kings* xxii. 19. (*I ſaw the Lord ſitting on his throne, and all the* Hoſt of Heaven *ſtanding by him on his right hand and on his left*;) are, in another deſcription of the like viſion, called the *Sons of God*, Job i. 6. *There was a day when the* Sons of God *came to preſent themſelves before the Lord.* Again, *Dan.* iii. 25. *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaw *four men looſe, walking in the midſt of the fire*; *and the Form of the Fourth*, ſays he, *is like the Son of God*; or like a *Son of God*, that is, like *an Angel*; as the ſame perſon is ſtiled, ver. 28. of that chapter. Upon the ſame account; namely, upon account of having received *Life* from the hands of God, *the Life of an intelligent and rational Being*, our firſt Father *Adam* is called, *The Son of God*, Luke iii. 38. which was the Son of *Adam*, which was the Son of *God*. And *all mankind*, conſidered as Creatures endued with Reaſon and Underſtanding, in oppoſition to *Idols*, which have neither Underſtanding, Senſe, nor Life, are ſaid to be *The Off-ſpring* of God, *Acts* xvii. 29. This therefore is the *firſt* and original Senſe, wherein God is in Scripture ſtiled our *Father*. It ſignifies our deriving from him our *Being* and our *Life*. *All* things are his *Creatures*; but *Intelligent* Beings only are his *Sons*.

2*dly*, Thus far God is our *Father* by *Nature*. But 2*dly*, there is ſtill a higher and more peculiar ſenſe, wherein the Scripture repreſents God as being our *Father ſpiritually*, by *religion and grace*. Concerning which St. *Paul* thus ſpeaks, *Rom.* viii. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father*. The true explication of which Notion, may (I think) rightly be ſet forth in the following manner. As God is in *general* the Father of all *intelligent* and rational Beings, ſo he is in a more *particular* and exalted manner the Father of Him, who in Scripture is ſtiled *The Only-begotten Son*; the *Brightneſs of his* Father's *Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon*; the *Image of the Inviſible God*, and *the Firſt-born of every Creature*, Col. i. 15. By the interpoſition of this divine perſon, the only-begotten Son, *it pleaſed the Father*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *to reconcile all things unto himſelf*, Col. i. 19. *By Him*, ſaith he, *to reconcile* all *things*, ver. 20. *whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven.* The Meaning is: The whole World of rational Creatures being conſidered as the *Family* of God, (according to that Text before-cited, which declares that *Of Him the whole* Family *in Heaven and in Earth is named*;) the government of this Houſe of God is repreſented by the Apoſtle, as adminiſtred by the only-be-

Eph. i. 22.

begotten Son; whom the Father has *given to be the Head over all things*, that *he might gather together in One all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on Earth, even in Him*, Eph. i. 10. By *Sin*, men reject themselves; and in the divine Justice, are rejected out of This houshold of God, and are no more worthy to be called his Sons. But by True Repentance and Amendment of Life, made available through the Intercession of Christ our great High-Priest; they who *were sometimes alienated, and Enemies in their Minds by wicked Works*, are again *reconciled*, Col. i. 21. and, *Through Him have access* again *by one Spirit unto the Father*; and *are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the* Houshold *of God*, Eph. ii. 18. This Restoring of Sinners by Repentance and Reformation of Life, through the Mediation of Christ, to the Favour of God, is elegantly stiled by St. *Paul, God our Father's* Adoption *of Children by Jesus Christ to Himself*, Eph. i. 2, 5. The Effect of which reconciliation, to those who by the Practice of Virtue and Righteousness, continue to live worthy of their most Holy Calling; the Effect of it is, that *Christ is not ashamed to call them Brethren*, Heb. ii. 11. that *God himself* vouchsafes them the Denomination of *Sons*, 1 *Joh.* iii. 1. *Behold, what manner of Love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God*; and that accordingly they have *access* with confidence to the Throne of Grace, as to a merciful and reconciled *Father*; *Gal.* iv. 5. Ye have *received the Adoption of Sons*; *And because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying Abba, Father*; *wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son.* In consequence of this State of Reconciliation, our Saviour in all his Discourses constantly represents God, as having the tender care and affection of a *Father* towards us: teaches us to acknowledge him and look up to him as our Father, upon account of his continual *Providence* in preserving us; his *Love*, in revealing himself to us by his Son; his *Goodness*, in being ready to assist us with his Spirit; his *Mercy* in forgiving our Offences; his *Authority*, mixt with the greatest *Patience*, in correcting us, not, as earthly parents, *after their own pleasure, but for* Our *Profit*, Heb. xii. 10. And, to incourage us to pray to him, he lays before us That moving and most pathetick Argument, *Mat.* vii. 11. *If ye being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* In the Writings indeed of *Some* Authors, God seems sometimes to be represented to us under a different character; as a *hard master, expecting to reap where he has not sown, and to gather where he has not strawed.* But such representations are consequences only of mens own private Opinions; and not taught, but *reproved*, in Scripture. For God *is* Love; and he loves, and does good to, all his Creatures; and his tender mercies are over all his works. Only against wilful *wickedness*, he is indeed irreconcileably severe, and *unrighteousness* is his abhorrence and abomination.

SERM. XX.

II. Having Thus briefly explained what the Scripture means, when it stiles God our *Father*, I proceed now in the 2*d* place to show *what* we are to understand, when we find it affirmed of him that he *is in Heaven.* As if He who is equally in *all* places, could be confined in *Any*; or any proper Habitation could be ascribed to *Him*, whom *the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*, Is. lxvi. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool*; *Where is the House that ye build unto me? and Where is the place of my Rest?* The true meaning therefore, when God is said to *Be in Heaven*, is to express his *Height and Dignity*; not in *place*, but in *Dominion* and *Power:* It being only a *similitude* drawn into common Speech, from the situation of things in Nature. As the Heavenly Bodies, the Sun and Stars, are High above us in *place*; and all Earthly Blessings depend on the Sun and Rain and the Descent of kindly Influences *literally from above:* so, by an easy *figure* of Speech, whatsoever is above us *in Power*, we are from hence used to represent as being above us *in Place.* The Power and Dominion of the King of *Babylon*, is thus set forth by the Prophet *Isaiah*, ch. xiv. 13, 14. *Thou hast said in thine Heart, I will ascend above the Heights of the clouds, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God!* And the *Destruction* of 2 Kings viii. 27.

SERM. XX.

his Monarchy is described after the like manner, ver. 12. *How art thou fallen from Heaven!* Thus likewise our Saviour speaking of the *Pride* and *Greatness* of *Capernaum*; *And thou Capernaum*, says he, *which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell*, Mat. xi. 23. And with Us *Now*, Men's being *High* or *Low* in *Place*, is not meant to express their *habitation* upon *Hills* or in Vallies, but the Dignity of their Station in the World. The Greatness and Dignity of *our* Saviour's *own* Kingdom, is represented in Scripture, by his *sitting at the* right hand *of God in the* heavenly *places:* We know that God has no Hands, nor any Shape or Figure; But the meaning of Christ's sitting on his right Hand, is, his being exalted next to him in Authority and Power. Thus therefore when we speak likewise of *God*, even the invisible Father himself, as being *in Heaven*; it must always be understood to express his *Supremacy*, not in *Place*, but in *Power and Dominion*; that He is the High and Holy One, Great and Glorious and Supreme above All.

But there is also *another* reason of this expression, of God's being *in Heaven*; To signify, that tho' of his real actual *presence* there is indeed no Confinement, yet of his *Glory and Majesty* there is in That place a particular and extraordinary *Manifestation*. Thus the Archangel in the Book of *Tobit* represents it, ch. xii. 15. *I am* (saith he) *one of the Seven Holy Angels, which go in and out before the* Glory *of the Holy One*; and the Salutation to the Churches, which begins the Book of the Revelation, is of the same Nature, ch. i. 4. *Grace be unto you and Peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before his Throne.* The *real* and proper *Presence* of God is equally and necessarily in *All* places: But his *Throne*, his *Glory*, the place where the righteous shall see his *Face*, that is, a more particular glorious manifestation of his Power and Majesty; this, is in *Heaven*. In like manner here upon *Earth*; in places where God has been pleased more particularly to manifest his Glory, to place his Name There, to receive There the Homage of his Servants; in those places God in Scripture-Phrase is said to *Be*. Not as if at the same time he was not equally in all *other* places also: *For in Him we live and move and have our Being*, Acts xvii. 28. And as *Job* elegantly expresses it, ch. xxiii. 8. *Behold, I go* forward, *but he is not there*; *and* backward, *but I cannot perceive him*; *On the* left *hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him*; *he hideth himself on the* right *hand, that I cannot see him:* But the Meaning of God's being said to *Be* in *particular places*, is, that in those places he chose to *manifest* himself to his Servants, and to receive *Homage from* them. The Patriarch *Jacob*, concerning the place where he first saw the Vision of Angels, ascending and descending out of Heaven; *surely*, saith he, *the Lord is in this place*, Gen. xxviii. 16; *and it shall be the house of God*, ver. 22. In like manner in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, the *Glory* of God *appeared visibly*, 2 Chr. vii. 1. and There it also was, when it did *not* appear: And how He, whom the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, did thus at that time dwell on Earth, in a Temple made with hands, is in a lively manner expressed by *Solomon*, 1 Kings viii. 30. *Hearken thou to the Supplication of thy Servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray in*, or *towards, this place*; *and hear thou in* Heaven *thy dwelling-place*: The meaning is; God, who is present in *every* place, had appointed in *That place* to receive his Tribute of Worship. Again; when the Lord appeared to *Moses* in the Bush, *the place*, says he, *whereon thou standest, is Holy Ground*, Exod. iii. 5. Not that *God* himself was present even Then in the Bush, any more than in all other places; but the place was made Holy, by God's manifesting his *Glory* there; For so St. *Stephen* expressly tells us, Acts vii. 30. *There appeared to Moses an* Angel *of the Lord, in a flame of Fire in the Bush.*

In like manner, God is said in Scripture to *dwell in the* Hearts of good men: And that the *Bodies* of them which are sanctified, are *Temples* of the Holy Ghost; God dwelling in them *by* his Holy Spirit: Not by any Confinement of the *Presence* of God; but by his being pleased to show forth the *Power and Influences* of his Holy Spirit, in particular places, and to particular persons.

III. Ha-

SERM. XX.

III. Having thus ſhown at large, what the Scripture means by ſtiling *God* our *Father*, and by affirming him to *be in Heaven*; I am in the 3d place to conſider, what we are to underſtand by *calling any* man *our Father upon the Earth*. And This plainly appears in the Context, from the whole Scope and Deſign of our Saviour's diſcourſe, in the directions he gives to his Diſciples. *The Scribes and Phariſees*, ſays he, *ſit in Moſes's ſeat*; —— *But do not ye after their works: For they* —— *love greetings in the Markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi: But be not ye called Rabbi; for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt: And call no man your Father upon the Earth; for One is your Father, which is in Heaven: Neither be ye called Maſters; for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt.* From whence it clearly appears, that *calling any man our Father upon Earth*, ſignifies, paying to any Earthly Teacher, (not a *due* regard and attention, but) That *deference*, which the Scribes and the Phariſees were by our Saviour reproved for unjuſtly claiming. And the Deference or Regard *they* claimed, was, that men ſhould follow them ignorantly and *implicitly* in the Traditions they taught. In the Hiſtories of the Antient *Jews* 'tis obſerved, that they frequently preferred the Traditions of their Rabbi's, even before the Writings of the Prophets themſelves. And This Account of them we find confirmed in Scripture. God complained *of old* by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. xxix. 13. *Their Fear towards me is taught by the Precept of men*; i. e. Human Authority had *too much* weight among them in matters of Religion. In our *Saviour's time*, things were grown to a ſtill higher degree of Corruption in this reſpect: *In vain*, ſays our Lord to the Phariſees, *do they worſhip* God, *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments* (or Inventions) *of* Men, *Mar.* vii. 7. *For, laying aſide the Commandment of God, ye hold the Tradition of Men*, ver. 8. And he repeats it again in the next verſe; *Full well ye reject the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own Tradition*, ver. 9. *Making the word of God of none effect, through your Tradition which ye have delivered*, ver. 13. The Profeſſors of *Chriſtianity* itſelf quickly began, even in the *earlieſt* times, to fall into ſome degrees of the ſame Fault; as appears by the inſtructions St. *Paul* gives to *Titus*, ch. i. 14. *Rebuke them ſharply, that they* —— *may not give heed to* —— *Fables and* Commandments of Men. Some of theſe Commandments of Men, he particularizes, *Col.* ii. 18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worſhipping of Angels, intruding into thoſe things which he hath not ſeen, vainly puft up by his fleſhy mind.* In *after-times*, theſe *Commandments* of Men (as is the nature of all Superſtition) continually multiplied and increaſed; according to the Apoſtle's Prophecy, 2 *Tim.* iv. 3. *The Time*, ſays he, *will come, when they will not endure ſound doctrine*, (that is, they will not be content with the Form of Sound words delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles;) *but after their own luſts ſhall heap up to themſelves Teachers*, —— *and ſhall turn away their ears from the Truth, and ſhall be turned unto Fables.* And the only poſſible way to prevent this Evil, is to conſider, that this aſſumed Authority *of Men* in matters of Faith, prevailed from time to time more and more, till at length it ended in the eſtabliſhment of that Kingdom of This World, which we call *Popiſh religion.* And here I cannot omit to obſerve, that the word *Pope*, the original of which is the old *Greek* word πάππα, ſignifies *Father*; and it ſignifies *Father* in that *very* ſenſe, wherein the Text forbids us to *call any man Father upon Earth.* For by calling a man *Father* here, our Saviour plainly means *having regard to* human *Authority in matters of Faith, or in Doctrines of Religion.* Which thing is altogether inconſiſtent with true Chriſtianity; becauſe the *revealed* Will of God, or whatever is *additional* to the law of Nature, is *at once* made known to us *Whole* and *Entire* in the Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles. The adhering immoveably to which Rule, the Law of Nature and of the Goſpel, is acknowledging that *One* only *is our Father, which is in Heaven*; and *one* only *our Maſter, which is Chriſt:* All *we*, are *brethren* only; and have *no* Authority to *make* any doctrines of Religion, but only to perſwade and earneſtly exhort men to practiſe what Chriſt has already taught. The *Apoſtles themſelves*, did not take upon them to exceed their

SERM. XX.

their Master's instructions: Much *more* inexcusable are vain men, who in *later* Ages have been guilty of so great and high a presumption. The Power which the Church of *Rome* has assumed, of imposing Doctrines of Faith by the Authority of *Popes*, and of *general Councils*, and *Armies*, and *Inquisitions*, is most elegantly described in Scripture under the character of a *man of Sin, sitting in the Temple of God*; that is, in his Church; *exalting himself above God, shewing himself that He is God, speaking great words against the most High*, and taking upon himself to *change Times and Laws*, and commanding *all the World* to *worship him*; that is imposing upon men by Force, his own Religion. This is the description given us of the Church of *Rome* in the Prophecies of *Scripture*; and whosoever *taketh from*, or *addeth to*, the *words of* that inspired Rule, by endeavouring to set up *any* human Authority in matters of Faith, makes himself in proportion a partaker of the Sin, of that great Corruptness of the World.

2 Thess. ii. 4.

Dan. vii. 25. Rev. xiii. 8.

IV. And now, having sufficiently explained what is meant by *calling any man Father upon the Earth*; it will be very obvious to understand, in the 4th and last place, how the *ground and reason* of this prohibition is assigned to be This, that *One is our Father, which is in Heaven*. For, our *Father in Heaven* having clearly, and fully, prescribed to us the conditions of Salvation through Christ; It follows evidently that They who *call* men *Fathers upon Earth*, that is, who of their own Fancies make *other* conditions of Salvation, thereby causing Divisions and Contentions among their Brethren; do in effect subvert all true Religion. For, *other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ*; that is, the *doctrine* already taught, by *Christ Himself* and his Apostles. If any man *departs from This* foundation, and teaches for doctrines the Commandments of Men; he *forsakes the Fountain of Living waters, and hews him out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water*, Jer. ii. 13. Or, as St. *Paul* expresses it, *Col.* ii. 19. *not holding the Head, from which all the Body has nourishment ministred*, his religion consequently is vain. Or if *upon* this true Foundation, he *builds the Hay and Stubble* of unintelligible Speculations, and doctrines useless in Practice, he at least *loses* great part of his *Reward*, 1 *Cor.* iii. 12, 15. For *This* reason, it highly imports all *Christians* to *take heed* how *they hear*, Luk. viii. 18; and diligently to *search the Scriptures*, wherein are *the words of eternal Life*. And they who have Power and Influence over *others*, can never too often recollect, how God complains by the Prophet, concerning the Shepherds of *Israel*, that *with Force and with Cruelty have ye ruled*. Ezek. xxxiv. 4; and how our Saviour instructs *his* Disciples, saying, *Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise Authority upon them; But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant; For* even *the Son of Man* himself *came not to be ministred unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, Matt. xx. 25, 26, 28. The Head of the Church of *Rome* profanely ridicules this Text, by stiling himself the *Servant of the Servants of Christ*, at the same time that he imperiously imposes upon their Faith his own Doctrines and Creeds, and persecutes them to death if they submit not to *Him* and his general Councils as *Fathers upon the Earth*. But the *True* Apostles of our Lord, did not *so learn Christ*. *We preach not ourselves*, saith St. *Paul*, *but Christ Jesus the Lord*: Neither *have we Dominion over your Faith, but are Helpers of your Joy*, 2 Cor. i. 24. Thus spake the Apostles concerning *themselves*, even though they were *inspired* persons, and had a just claim to infallibility in Doctrine. How much *more* ought All, who have no pretence to such miraculous Gifts, to be of the same *meek* Spirit; following the Admonition of St. *Peter*, 1 Pet. v. 3. *Feed the flock of God, —— not as being* Lords *over God's heritage, but as being ensamples to the Flock:* And That of St. *James*, ch. iii. 13. *Who is a wise man, and indued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew, out of a good conversation, his works with* meekness *of Wisdom*; and ver. 1. of the same chapter, *My Brethren, be not many* Masters: The word in the original, is, *many* Teachers;

1 Cor. iii. 11.

2 Cor. iv. 5.

ers; but our Tranſlators very rightly render it, *Maſters*; becauſe the Apoſtle there ſpeaks of the very ſame kind of haughty and imperious Teachers, againſt whoſe Practices our Saviour warns his Diſciples in the Text, and in the words next following: *Be not ye called, Maſters; for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt*; and *call no man your Father upon the Earth: for One is your Father which is in Heaven.* Which admonition, that *All* among us may conſtantly attend to, both who *Teach* and *Hear* the Simplicity of the Goſpel; God of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.* SERM. XX.

SERMON XXI.

Of being the CHILDREN of GOD.

ROM. viii. 16, 17.

The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God: And if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Chriſt.

SERM. XXI.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words of the Apoſtle, I ſhall indeavour to explain briefly, 1*ſt*, What is here meant by our being *Children of God*. 2*dly*, What is to be underſtood, by our being ſtiled *Heirs of God*, and *joint-heirs with Chriſt*. And 3*dly*, How the *Spirit of God*, the *Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our Spirit*, if we be good Chriſtians, that theſe Characters do truly belong to us.

1*ſt*, I am to conſider what is here meant by our being *children of God*. God is in Scripture ſtiled, *The Father of All*; Eph. iv. 6. *One God and Father of All, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.* Here, the title *Father* is applied to him, in reſpect of his giving *Being* to all things, as they are his *Creatures* and the Work of his hands. For though inanimate or irrational creatures can in no Senſe be ſtiled the *Children* of God; yet God, conſidered as the Author of All Being, may properly enough be ſtiled *the Father of the Univerſe*. In a Senſe ſomewhat more reſtrained, and with regard to ſuch Beings to whom he has given *Life* and

and *Reaſon* and *Moral* Faculties, God is ſtiled the *Father, of whom the Whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*, Eph. iii. 15. The *Whole Family* of *rational* creatures, *Angels* and *Men*. And theſe in like manner, upon account of the *living* and *rational* nature he has given them, are frequently in Scripture ſtiled *the Sons of God*. By *Sin*, Men forfeit the Benefit of this natural relation to God their Father, and become *Strangers* and *Aliens* and *without God* in the World; being rejected by him, and no longer looked upon as his Sons, but caſt off as Objects of his Wrath and Diſpleaſure. By *Repentance* and *renewed Obedience*, they who are effectually convinced of the Folly and Unreaſonableneſs of Sin, return, as far as in them lies, to their Father's houſe, and deſire to have Acceſs again to his Favour and Mercy. And God, by accepting their Repentance, and pardoning their paſt Sins according to the gracious Terms and Declarations of the Goſpel, and giving them the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit to ſanctify them for the future; receives them again, as a gracious Father, and *adopts* them for his Sons; (in St. *Paul*'s language, gives them *the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father*;) and they become again *Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſehold of God*. This is what the Scripture elſewhere calls *Regeneration*, or the *New Birth*; and ſometimes, the *New Creation*; Deſcribing ſuch perſons, as being in a ſpiritual ſenſe, Created anew *unto good works*; and Born, *not of blood, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*, Joh. i. 13. *Being* born again, *not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, having, *according to his abundant mercy*, begotten us again *unto a lively hope*, ver. 3. And the plain Meaning of all theſe figurative expreſſions, is; that when a Sinner ſincerely returns to a Senſe of his Duty, and effectually amends his Life; God, who conſidereth whereof we are made, and remembreth that we are but Duſt, pitieth him even as a *Father* pitieth his children; and though in ſtrictneſs of eſtimation he be indeed no more worthy to be called his Son, yet, upon this his true Repentance, he receives him again to the Arms of his Mercy, and ſays, *Rev.* xxi. 7, *I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son*. Anſwerable to which account of this relative character on *God*'s part, 'tis manifeſt that the Title on *Our* part, of being *children of God*, is expreſſive of the higheſt obligations of *Duty* and *Obedience*, and of our ſtedfaſtly perſevering in the practice of all *Virtue* and *Righteouſneſs*. The departing from which originally, as it cauſed thoſe who *by creation* were naturally the Sons of God, to become Strangers and Enemies to him; ſo by returning to it again, and by no other method whatſoever, can they, who through wicked works have been ſtrangers and enemies to God, become again, through the divine Mercy, the Sons of God *by adoption*, and continue to preſerve That character by their perſeverance therein. *In This, the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil: Whoſoever does not righteouſneſs, is not of God.*

SERM. XXI.

Having thus explained briefly, what the Apoſtle in the text means, by ſtiling us *the Children of God*; the next thing I propoſed to conſider, was

2. What we are to underſtand by the following characters; being *Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt: If children, then Heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt*. The word, *children* being a Title of Affection and Love, implies, when uſed in the *figurative* Senſe, an expectation of *favour*, and a dependance for *Support*. Gal. iv. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son; And if a Son, then an* Heir *of God through Chriſt*. The expreſſion is exactly the ſame with That in the Text; *We are the children of God, and, if children, then Heirs*. If the relation of *children* be acknowledged, the very Notion of that relation carries along with it in courſe a Promiſe, or Aſſurance of a Bleſſing. And becauſe *God* is infinitely *more able* to provide for thoſe who rely on *Him*, than *earthly Parents* are to make proviſion for their natural Poſterity; and the portion of *God*'s children can by no poſſible misfortune, by no Accident, by no Force, by no Fraud, be taken from them, unleſs by departing from the commandments of their Heavenly Father, they voluntarily caſt themſelves out of *His* Favour. Therefore the inheritance of thoſe *on whom the Father has beſtowed ſuch manner of love, that they ſhould be called the Sons of God*, is in Scripture ſtiled *a Kingdom which cannot be moved, the things which cannot be ſhaken*, a *City which hath foundations*,

Heb. xii. 28, 27. xi. 10, 13, 14.

SERM. XXI.

Acts xx. 32. Col. i. 12. 1 Pet. i. 3.

dations, a *continuing city*, an *inheritance among them that are ſanctified*, the *inheritance of the Saints in Light*, an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away*. And God himſelf, in St. *John*'s viſion, ſpeaking from the throne of his glory, thus declares, *Rev.* xxi. 7. *He that overcometh, ſhall* inherit *all things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son.* Here the Title of *Son* or *Child of God*, being uſed as of the ſame import with One that is to inherit *all things*, that is, all thoſe things which God has promiſed to them that love him; is exactly correſpondent to the Apoſtle's manner of ſpeaking in the Text, *If children, then* Heirs. And becauſe the Promiſe of God, who cannot lie, ſtandeth always ſure; ſo that the Reward of Virtue, however at preſent diſtant and inviſible, is yet in reality as certain in the determinations of the Divine Counſel, as if it was already actually in poſſeſſion; hence St. *Paul*, carrying the ſame figure ſtill *Higher*, in his deſcription of the Happineſs of thoſe ſincerely religious perſons, whom in the text he ſtiles Heirs *of God*, thus expreſſes himſelf, *Eph.* ii. 5. *God hath quickned us together with Chriſt, and hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit* (hath *already* made *us ſit*) *together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus.* And elſewhere he calls *them, fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the houſhold of God:* And tells them that they *are come*, (that they are already come) *unto Mount Sion, unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem*; and *to an innumerable company of Angels*, and *to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect*, and *to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, and *to God the Judge of All.*

This is the full meaning of that *Second* character given in the Text to ſincere Chriſtians; that they are *Heirs of God*; Heirs of his *Promiſes*, and *Kingdom.*

It follows; *And Joint-Heirs with Chriſt: Heirs with God, and Joint-heirs with Chriſt.* The ſenſe of which expreſſion is this. Though *Men*, as well as all ſuperiour rational Creatures, are originally by Creation the Children of God; and ſo long as they continue to obey the Law of their Nature and the Commands of God, cannot fail conſequently to continue in his Favour; And though *Sinners*, when they ſincerely repent and amend, have good and reaſonable Grounds, from the conſideration of God's natural Perfections, to hope for Mercy and Compaſſion at his hands: Yet neither to *Sinners* is God under any obligation of *Juſtice*, to reſtore them upon their Repentance to the *ſame ſtate of Favour* as if they had never ſinned; nor even to the moſt *innocent* and perfectly *Sinleſs* Creatures, (if any ſuch there were,) is he under Any natural obligation to confer *Immortality*, and an *eternal Kingdom of Glory.* All that *Juſtice* in That caſe requires, is, to diſtinguiſh them according to their Deſerts, in That rank of the Creation wherein their natural Capacities placed them, and for ſuch a Space of Time as the original good pleaſure of the Creator allotted them. The Being which God freely gave, he may at any time without any injuſtice take away: And no Creature, even *without* conſideration of *Sin*, has any more claim of Right to continue for ever, or even for any limited time to be exalted above the natural improvement of its original capacities, than it had any Right to be created *Before* it was, or to have been made in Any *Higher* Species of Creatures. *Eternal Life* therefore, or the *Kingdom of Heaven*, is the *Gift* of God; not due to Mankind by *Nature*; not a Claim of *Right*; no, not even if they had continued Innocent; much leſs, to returning *Sinners*; but 'tis the *Gift*, the *Free Gift* of God, originally in the State of *Innocence*; and to *Penitents* ſtill much more is it merely a *Free Gift*, in and through *Chriſt. That which is born of the Fleſh, is Fleſh*; and has no title, no claim of Right, *naturally*, to the *Spiritual Kingdom* of God. But the Father has appointed unto his Son Jeſus Chriſt a Kingdom, and *I*, ſays our Lord to his Diſciples, *appoint unto You a Kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me*: That *whoſoever overcometh*, (that is, whoſoever prevails over the ſinful Temptations of the World,) may *ſit down with Me in* My *Throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſat down with my Father in* His *Throne.* By *Nature*, we are only in general the *Creatures* of the Almighty, and the *Works* of his Hands. By *Sin*, we were become Objects of his *Wrath* and *Diſpleaſure.* By obeying the gracious Terms of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, we are *not only* reſtored again to the Favour of God, as of a merciful and tender Father; but our nature is moreover *exalted* by him to ſome ſimilitude with *His*, who was in a ſingular manner the *Son of God*, and yet condeſcended to become our Elder Brother, by being made in the likeneſs of *Men. He* voluntarily became himſelf the

Son

SERM. XXI.

Son of Man; and *as many as received him, to them gave he power that* They *ſhould become the* Sons of God. He has received them as *Joint Heirs* with himſelf in his Father's Kingdom; And God, even *the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, has* begotten *them again* (as St. *Peter* expreſſes it) *unto a lively hope,* (that is, unto the Hope of eternal Life,) *by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead.* He hath cauſed them to be *conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the Firſt-born among Many Brethren.* And *for this cauſe,* ſaith St. *Paul, Heb.* ii. 11. Chriſt *is not aſhamed to call them brethren.* Nay, the ſame Apoſtle, in a moſt elegant and lively manner, carrying the ſame figure of ſpeech ſtill higher, *Eph.* v. 30. *We are members,* ſays he, *of his Body, of his Fleſh, and of his Bones.* Thoſe who never had the Knowledge of the Goſpel, are God's children by *creation*; in ſuch a ſenſe as St. *Luke* ſays of *Adam,* that he was the *Son of God.* And with regard to Theſe, the *Judge of the whole Earth will do what is Right,* and *with Equity ſhall he judge the Nations.* But as to his *Free Gifts,* he is ſtill always at liberty to do what he pleaſes with his own: And in that Kingdom which he has appointed to his Son Jeſus Chriſt, he may appoint whom he himſelf thinks fit to ſit on his right hand and on his left. He may *have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compaſſion on whom he will have compaſſion.* The meaning is; not that God will act arbitrarily and without Reaſon; as ſome have abſurdly underſtood theſe words: But that He, and He only, is the competent, proper, and unerring Judge, upon what Perſons, and on what Conditions, 'tis fit for him to beſtow his Favours. And in and through Chriſt, he may give power, upon what Terms and Conditions he pleaſes, to ſuch as ſhall attain to thoſe Conditions, to become in a *peculiar* manner the *Children of God*; and *if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God,* and *Joint Heirs with Chriſt.*

It remains, in the

3*d* and laſt place, That I conſider in what ſenſe the Apoſtle here affirms, that the *Spirit of God,* the *Spirit itſelf, beareth witneſs with Our Spirit,* if we be good Chriſtians, that theſe Characters do truly belong to us. For the clearer explication of which aſſertion, I obſerve

1*ſt,* That nothing can be more abſurd, nothing can be more contrary to the whole Tenour of the Goſpel, than the Notions of thoſe men, who take their own *Enthuſiaſtick imaginations* to be the Teſtimony of the Spirit of God. Such perſons judge not of the Tree, by its Fruit; They compare not the Courſe of their Lives, with the Rule of God's Commandments; They judge not of their being ſpiritual perſons, or having the Spirit of Chriſt, by their practice of thoſe Virtues, which the Scripture calls *bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit:* But they have a ſtrong, confident Conceit, that they are the elect, the choſen people of God; and the mere ſtrength of this groundleſs imagination, they apprehend to be *the Spirit of God bearing witneſs with their Spirit, that they are the Children of God.* But this is ſo ſenſeleſs a notion, ſo manifeſtly deſtructive of all Virtue, and of all the true difference between Good and Evil; that it needs but barely be mentioned among perſons of common Underſtanding, to expoſe the Folly of it. Wherefore

2*dly,* In the *Apoſtles days,* the *miraculous Gifts* and *Graces of the Spirit,* made evident by their *real* and *viſible* Effects, as in That great Inſtance of the Gift of Tongues beſtowed as upon This Day, were undeniable Teſtimonies of the Spirit of God being given to thoſe perſons, in whom thoſe Effects appeared. Not that all who were endued even with miraculous Gifts, were conſequently good and ſincere Chriſtians: But theſe Gifts to thoſe who beheld them, were evident Atteſtations of the Spirit to the Truth of the *Goſpel:* And to the *Perſons themſelves,* on whom thoſe Gifts were beſtowed, if they were conſcious in their own Hearts of their being ſincere in their Profeſſion, and virtuous in their Practice, then theſe Gifts were indeed *the Spirit of God bearing witneſs with Their Spirit, that they were the Children of God.* But

3*dly,* Both in the *Apoſtles days,* and in *all ſucceeding generations,* even to the end of the World; the ſeveral *Declarations* which the Spirit of God hath made, by the *Prophets* in the *Old* Teſtament, and by *Chriſt and his Apoſtles* in the *New,* compared with the Verdict of our own Conſciences, concerning the agreeableneſs of our

SERM. XXI.

Actions to those declarations; these are the Testimony of *the Spirit itself bearing witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.* The Promises of God made to men in Christ, and established upon the Terms of the Gospel, are represented in the *New Testament* as being *Sealed*, or *confirmed by Covenant*, to us in Baptism: And therefore, speaking concerning Baptized Converts, 2 *Cor.* i. 22. *God* saith St. *Paul, hath also* Sealed *us, and given the Earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts.* Consequently they who *make good* This obligation, by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit in the suitable Practice of a Virtuous Life; These *have* the *Seal* or *Earnest* of the Spirit: 2 *Tim.* ii. 19. *The Foundation of God standeth sure, having This* Seal, —— *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity:* And, *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are* Sealed *unto the day of Redemption.* The Testimony of a good Conscience, is, in the language of the text, the *Witness of our* own *Spirit*; And the Agreement of this Testimony of our own Conscience, with the Revealed Declarations of the Will of God, when carefully and duly compared together, is what the Apostle here stiles the *Spirit of God bearing witness with Our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.*

By this *One* observation, the whole Discourse of the Apostle in this chapter becomes very plain and intelligible: And at the same time, by the *whole* tenour of his discourse in this chapter, is *this* clearly confirmed to be the true meaning of the Text. *Ver.* 1. *There is now,* says he, *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit,* That is, who are guilty of no debauchery or vicious Practices, but live in the regular practice of those moral virtues, which he elsewhere by name calls *the Fruits of the Spirit. For to be carnally* (that is, viciously) *minded,* (ver. 6.) *is death; but to be spiritually* (that is, virtuously) *minded, is life and peace.* Ver. 8. *So then they that are in the Flesh,* (they that are under the power, and live in the practice of any known Sin,) *cannot please God:* And
ver. 9. *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,* (that is, if any man who professeth the Name of Christ, yet *departeth not from iniquity,* which is the *Seal* upon which the *Foundation* or Covenant *of God standeth sure*; If any man in This sense *hath not the Spirit of Christ,*) *he is none of his. For if ye live after the Flesh,* ver. 13. *ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God,* (that is, as many as are prevailed upon by the Motives of the Gospel to live answerably to their Holy profession,) *they are the Sons of God,* ver. 14. And that they *are* so, they may certainly know by these Fruits *of the Spirit* appearing in the whole course of their *lives,* compared with the Declarations *of the Spirit* made in the *Gospel*; even as certainly as a Tree is known by its Fruit. For Thus, adds the Apostle in the Text, *the Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God; and if Children, then Heirs, Heirs of God, and Joint Heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

The reason of his annexing these *last* words concerning our *Suffering* with Christ, is, because in the whole System of moral Virtues which are the Fruits of the Spirit, there is no one that affords a more certain Mark or Testimony of Sincerity; there is no one, to which a man's own *Spirit* or Conscience beareth witness with more confidence, or to which All the Declarations of the *Spirit of* God bear witness with greater Clearness and Assurance; than to this virtue of chusing to run the hazard of Suffering at any time for Truth and Righteousness. 2 Tim. ii. 11. *It is a* faithful *Saying, If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* Wherefore, *think it not strange,* —— saith St.
1 Pet. iv. 13. *Peter,* but *rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's Sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy.* In the Apostles days, *Suffering for* or *with Christ,* signified being *persecuted* for the Profession of *Christianity* in *general.* In later Ages, since the religion of Christ has in *Name* and *Form* been professed among the Nations, Persecution has more frequently been brought upon men for adhering to some *particular* Truths, and for opposing some *particular* Corruptions in practice. For, not only the Apostles suffered in *Their* days, but many also of the Best men in *our* days; yea, *and All,* in *All* days, says the Apostle St. *Paul, that will live godly in Christ Jesus,* shall *suffer persecution.* But whether they be persecuted by *men,* or no; yet if by stedfastly resisting the Temptations of Sin, they *be planted together* with Christ *in the likeness of his Death, they shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him,*

that

that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve Sin. Now if we be dead with Chriſt, we believe that we ſhall alſo live with him, Rom. vi. 5, 6, 8. This is what the *Spirit of God* conſtantly and uniformly declares and teſtifies, through the whole Scripture. And therefore they who by *theſe* declarations, and by the conſideration of *theſe* religious motives, are influenced to live in ſuch manner as that they can ſay with St. *Paul, Our rejoicing is This, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity —— we have had our converſation in the world*; Theſe, as often as they compare their *own* hearts and actions with the things that *God* has revealed unto us by his *Spirit*, have, according to the expreſſion in the Text, the *Spirit of God bearing witneſs with* Their *Spirit*, that *they are the Children of God.*

SERM. XXI.

SERMON

SERMON XXII.

Of Loving GOD.

MATT. xxii. 37, 38.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; This is the first and Great Commandment.

SERM. XXII.

IN these words there is observable; 1*st*, The *Duty* injoined; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*: 2*dly*, The *Circumstances* requisite, to make the performance of this Duty *acceptable and complete*; Thou shalt love him, *with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*: 3*dly*, The *Weight*, and *Importance*, of the Duty; It is *the first and Great Commandment*.

I. The Duty injoined, is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*. A Duty, in *every man's* mouth, of all *Religions*, and in *all* Sects: But, upon *what* Ground *its Obligation* is founded, and in *what* particulars the rational *Practice* of it consists, is not so clearly and universally understood. Men often talk very earnestly of *loving* God, while at the same time they in their Doctrine represent him as the most *hateful* Being in the Universe; cruel and partial; arbitrary, and tyrannical; showing favour to some, and making others miserable, for no other reason, but because he has absolute and irresistible Power. But what such persons speak concerning *loving* of God, is evidently nothing but *mere Forms* of *empty words*, without *any meaning* or *signification* at all; because there is in their Minds

Minds *no real Object*, *upon which* the Love they ſpeak of can be fixt. And where the *Root* thus is *rottenneſs*; (to uſe the Prophet *Iſaiah*'s Compariſon,) what wonder if the *Bloſſom*, and the *Fruit*, accordingly goes up as *Duſt*? what wonder if the expreſſions of their *Love* towards *God*, end in nothing but peeviſhneſs, contentiouſneſs, and perhaps *Hatred* towards their *Brethren*? A True *Love* of *God* muſt be founded upon a *right Senſe* of his *Perfections* being really *amiable* in *themſelves*, and *beneficial* to *Us*: And ſuch a *Love* of *God* will of Neceſſity ſhow forth itſelf, in our endeavouring to *practiſe* the *ſame* virtues ourſelves, and exerciſe them towards *others*, which we profeſs to *love* and admire in Him.

All *Perfection* is *in* itſelf lovely, and amiable in the very *nature* of the Thing: The Virtues and Excellencies of *Men remote* in Hiſtory, from whom we can receive *no perſonal* Advantage, excite in us an *Eſteem* whether we will or no: And every *good* mind, when it reads or thinks upon the character of an *Angel*, loves the Idea, though it has *no* preſent communication with the Subject to whom ſo lovely a character belongs: *Much* more, the inexhauſtible Fountain of *All* Perfections; of Perfections without number, and without limit; the Center, in which *All* Excellencies unite, in which *All* Glory reſides, and from which *every good thing* proceeds; cannot but be the Supreme Object of *Love*, to a reaſonable and intelligent Mind. Even *ſuppoſing* we ourſelves received no Benefit therefrom, yet infinite *Power*, *Knowledge*, *and Wiſdom* in conjunction, are lovely in the very *Idea*, and amiable even in the *abſtract Imagination*. But That which makes theſe Perfections moſt *truly and ſubſtantially*, moſt *really and permanently*, the Object of our Love; is the *Application* of them to *ourſelves*, and our *own* more immediate *Concerns*; by the conſideration of their being joined alſo with thoſe *relative and moral* Excellencies, which make them at the ſame time no leſs *beneficial* to Us, than they are excellent *abſolutely in their* own Nature. Then is God the *Complete* Object of Love, when together with the Notion of Infinite Power, Knowledge, and Wiſdom, we conſider him moreover as actually *governing the World*; and when, in the *exerciſe* of that Dominion over us, we conſider his *Truth and Faithfulneſs*, his *Juſtice and Impartiality*, his *Equity*, *Mercy*, *and Goodneſs* towards his Creatures; When we conſider his Goodneſs in giving us *Being*, and a *Being ſo excellent*; his Care, in making ſuch plentiful Proviſion for our *temporal Preſervation*, and for our *eternal Happineſs*; his Mercy, in ſending his Son to redeem us from Death, and to procure Pardon even for the *greateſt* of Sinners upon their true Repentance: When we conſider *theſe* things, I ſay, *Then* is it that God truly appears the complete Object of Love: For ſo our Saviour himſelf teaches us to argue; *Luk.* vii. 47. To whom *much* is forgiven, he will love the *more*; and the Apoſtle St. *John*, 1 Joh. iv. 19. We (ſays he) *love* Him, *becauſe he firſt loved* Us.

This therefore is the true Ground *and* Foundation of our Love towards God. But *wherein* this love towards God *conſiſts*, and by what *Acts* it is moſt properly exerciſed, has ſometimes been very much miſunderſtood. Men of ſtrong Paſſions and warm Imaginations, have been too apt to place it in a mere *Enthuſiaſtick zeal of Affection*, a ſort of Scholaſtick Speculation, unintelligible and fruitleſs; ſeated in the *Fancy* only, inſtead of the *Underſtanding*; and having no Effect upon the *Will*, or *Actions*, in the *general courſe* of a Man's Life. By which means, they make the *Love of God* a thing entirely *diſtinct* from the *Love of Virtue and Righteouſneſs*: Whereas the Scripture always ſpeaks of them as being One and *the ſame*; judging of Men conſtantly by that *never-failing* Rule, of diſcerning the Tree by its Fruits; and always repreſenting men to have juſt ſo much *Love* towards *God* in their *Hearts*, as they pay *Obedience* to his *Laws* in their *Actions*. The *only* Diſtinction found in Scripture, is, that our *Love of God* is *ſometimes* uſed in a more *reſtrained* Senſe, as diſtinguiſhed from the *Love of our* Neighbour; and then it ſignifies, that which is uſually called our *Duty towards* God; worſhipping the True *God*, and *Him Only*, in oppoſition to all Falſe *Gods*; and placing our *whole Faith and Truſt* in him accordingly. At *other* times 'tis uſed in a more *general* ſenſe, as including our whole Duty *both* towards *God* and towards *Men*; righteouſneſs towards *Men* being inſeparable from a true Love towards *God*; and it being impoſſible that he who loveth *God*, ſhould not love his *Brother* alſo. But in *Both* theſe Senſes, whether it be underſtood according to the more *limited*, or the more *general*, interpretation, it

SERM. XXII.

always ſignifies a moral Virtue, not a *Paſſion or Affection*; and is therefore in Scripture always *with great* Care explained and *declared* to mean, the *Obedience of a virtuous Life*, in oppoſition to the *Enthuſiaſm of a vain imagination*. In the *old* Teſtament, *Moſes*, in his *laſt* exhortation to the *Iſraelites*, thus expreſſes it; *Deut.* x. 12. *And now Iſrael, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to* love *him*? And *what* is *loving him*? why, he tells them in the very next words, 'tis *to walk in all his ways, and to ſerve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy Soul, to* keep *the* Commandments *of the Lord, and his Statutes which I command thee this day for thy good*. In the *New Teſtament*, our *Saviour* ſtill more *diſtinctly* expreſſes the ſame thing, inculcating and repeating it in ſuch a manner, as ſhows plainly his *Foreſeeing* at that time, in his own mind, how apt men would be to miſunderſtand it: *Joh.* xiv. 15, 21. *If ye* love *me*, ſaith he, keep *my Commandments*: *He that* hath *my Commandments, and* keepeth *them*; he *it is that* loveth *me*. And in his prophecy concerning the Signs of the End of the World, he puts *Love towards God*, as the *oppoſite* to *iniquity*; thereby plainly declaring it to mean the *ſame* as *Virtue*: Matt. xxiv. 12. *Becauſe* iniquity *ſhall abound, the* Love, ſaith he, *of Many ſhall wax cold*. And the beloved Diſciple, who, as he leaned more nearly upon his Maſter's Breaſt, ſo he ſeems in this matter to have been more particularly inſpired with his Maſter's Sentiments; *Whoſo*, ſays he, keepeth *his word*, in *Him verily is the Love of God perfected*; *Hereby know we, that we Are in Him*: *For* This *is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments*, 1 Joh. v. 3. And again, 2 *Joh.* vi. This, ſays he, *is* Love, *that we walk after his Commandments*. And, effectually to prevent ſuch Men's enthuſiaſtick Notions of Religion, as judge of their *Love towards God* by *any* empty Speculation, by *any* Warmth of Zeal in matters of Opinion, by *any* Paſſion or Affection whatſoever, wherewith the Mind or Imagination may, without any real Fruit of Virtue and Righteouſneſs, fancy itſelf tranſported; the ſame apoſtle frequently gives us this *one ſure* rule, in which there can be *no* Deception; that we meaſure the Truth of our Love towards *God*, by the extent and proportion of our Love towards our *Neighbour*. 1 Joh. iii. 17. *Whoſo ſeeth his* Brother *have need, and ſhutteth up his compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the Love of* God *in him*? Again, ch. iv. 12. 20. *No man hath ſeen* God *at any time*; *If we love* one another, *God dwelleth in Us, and his Love is perfected in us: If a man ſay, I love* God, *and hateth his* Brother, *he is a Liar*; *For he that loveth not his* Brother *whom he* hath *ſeen, how can he love* God, *whom he hath* not *ſeen*? The Argument is: God, who is *inviſible*, can *no otherwiſe* be ſhown to be the Object of our Love, than by our *delighting* to obey and imitate him, in Acts of Righteouſneſs, and Charity, and univerſal Good-Will towards Mankind who are *viſible* and always *with us*. This *Commandment have we from* Him, *that he who loveth* God, *love his* Brother *alſo*: That is, that whoſoever pretends to love *God*, ſhould *prove* the *Truth* of what he profeſſes by his behaviour towards *Men*. *For by* This *we know*, (as the ſame Apoſtle goes on, ch. v. 2.) *that we love the* children *of God, when we love God and keep his Commandments*. The words from their connexion with what went before, ſeem to be tranſpoſed; and that they ſhould not be read thus, *that we love the children of God*, when *we love* God; but on the other ſide, *by* This *we know that we love* God, when *we love the children* of God, *and keep his Commandments*. Thoſe who place the Sum of their religion in impoſing upon men blind Notions and unintelligible Opinions, and *hate* and *perſecute* All who differ from them; and, by endeavouring to *compel* Others into their own hypocriſy, fill the World with cruelty, violence and oppreſſion; Theſe perſons, I ſay, do in one *reſpect* act extreme wiſely; that they diſcourage men, as much as they can, from reading and ſtudying the Scriptures with their own eyes; leaſt they ſhould There ſee it ſet forth, in ſo *plain*, ſo *clear*, ſo *bright*, ſo *perpetual* and *unavoidable* a *Light*, how *different*, how *contrary*, Their Spirit is to the Spirit of *Chriſtianity*, which is the Spirit of *Love*. For, if they who *rightly* teach the *true* doctrine of Chriſt, ſhall *yet* be bid to *depart from him*, if in their own private lives they be *workers of iniquity*; much *more* ſhall the ſame Sentence be pronounced on thoſe, the manner of whoſe very *teaching* is *itſelf* a work of unrighteouſneſs, violence and oppreſſion. But to proceed: As the *Scripture* thus *expreſly*, ſo the *reaſon and nature of the thing itſelf* no leſs *plainly*, ſhows, in oppoſition to all Superſtitious Notions, that *Love towards God*, and *Virtue* or *Righteouſneſs of Life*, are in reality

1 Joh. ii. 5.

ver. 21.

reality only two different *Names* of One and the Same *Thing*. For, *What* is rational *Love*, but a *Deſire* to *pleaſe* the perſon beloved, and a *Complacency* or Satisfaction *in* pleaſing him? To *love* God therefore, is to have a ſincere *Deſire* of obeying his Laws, and a *Delight or Pleaſure* in the *Conſcience of That Obedience*. Wherever *This Obedience* is not found, Men may talk what they pleaſe, of *ardent Love and Devotion* towards God, of the *higheſt Zeal* and even *Fury* for his Service; it is *all* nothing but moſt *certain* hypocriſy. For whatever ſpecious pretences the Wit of Man may invent, our Saviour's Argument will for ever ſtand good; *men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thiſtles*. The Tree *will* always be known by its Fruit. Love towards God *will* always ſhow forth itſelf in doing his Will. *If a man* love *me*, ſaith our Saviour, *he* will *keep my words*, Joh. xiv. 23. To love *God*, is to love *Goodneſs*, *Righteouſneſs*, *Charity and Truth*: If therefore to *love* theſe Virtues, and live at the ſame time in the Practice of all the *contrary Vices* be a Contradiction; for the ſame reaſon it follows, that, to pretend to *love* God, and at the ſame time practiſe the *Vices which he hates*, is a Contradiction alſo. As *He only who* doth *righteouſneſs is righteous*; ſo *He only who* doth *what is pleaſing to God*, can be ſaid to *love* him. To *love* God, and yet delight to *diſobey* him, is a manifeſt inconſiſtency: And therefore the Pſalmiſt's Admonition, is both an *Argument* of *Reaſon*, and a *Rule* by which to *Try* men; *Pſ.* xcvii. 10. *Ye that* love *the* Lord, *ſee that ye* hate *the Thing which is* Evil. In Scripture, wicked men, and evil Spirits, are elegantly ſtiled Enemies *and* Haters *of God*: not that they oppoſe or withſtand his *Power*; for That is impoſſible; but becauſe they *hate* his Laws, and *delight* in what he forbids. In like manner therefore on the *other* ſide, Love *towards* God, is alſo impoſſible to be expreſſed by any *Benefit* we can do to *Him*, but can be teſtified only by our *Love of Righteouſneſs* and by our *Practice of Virtue*. Even to an *Earthly* Superiour, to a *Parent*, or a *Prince*, *Love* can no otherwiſe be ſhown from a *Child* or a *Servant*, than by chearfully obſerving the *Laws*, and promoting the true *Intereſt* of the Government he is under. There is *This* difference only; that Earthly Superiours are *then* only to be obeyed, when they command what we ſee to be juſt and right: But God, who, being infallible can *never* command what is wrong, is for that reaſon abſolutely to be obeyed in *all* things: Only, to prevent the Errors and the Frauds of *Men*, whether *impious* or *pious* Frauds, very *great* heed is to be taken, in matters of weight and importance, that whatever is pretended to be a Command of *God*, be really and indeed Such.

SERM. XXII.

Laſtly: That the *Love of God*, and the *Practice of Righteouſneſs*, are one and the ſame thing, appears from thoſe Texts, wherein all *Relation* of *Men to God*, is declared to be founded upon *Virtue* only. Thus the Title of *Sons* of God, *Rom.* viii. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God*, they *are the* Sons *of God*, and *Phil.* ii. 15. *That ye may be blameleſs and harmleſs, the* Sons *of God*. The Title of *Friendſhip* likewiſe: *Jam.* ii. 23. *It was imputed unto Abraham for righteouſneſs, and he was called the* Friend *of God:* He was *called*; that is, he was ſo ſtiled in the *old Teſtament* by God himſelf, *Iſ.* xli. 8; and 2 *Chr.* xx. 7. *Thou, Iſrael, art my Servant, the Seed of Abraham my* Friend. Our Saviour gives the *ſame* Title to his *Apoſtles*, upon the *ſame* ground; Joh. xv. 14. *ye are my* Friends, *if ye* do *whatſoever I command you*. And ſtill more emphatically, *Mat.* xii. 50. *Whoſoever ſhall* do the Will *of my Father which is in Heaven, the ſame is my* Brother *and* Siſter *and* Mother. *Chriſt* acknowledges *no relation*, but what ariſes from *religion only*; nor regards *any* declaration of *Love* towards him, other than that of Obedience to his Commands in the Goſpel. St. *Paul* elegantly purſues the ſame Similitude, 2 *Cor.* v. 16. *Henceforth know we no man after the Fleſh; yea, though we have known* Chriſt *after the Fleſh, yet now henceforth know we him no more:* His meaning is; All temporal perſonal Knowledge and Friendſhip, ſuch as was between Chriſt and his natural Relations here upon Earth, now diſappears; and no man knows Chriſt, or is known of him, any otherwiſe than in proportion as he obeys his Laws. The like is to be obſerved, concerning That Title given to the *Jews*, of being *God's peculiar people*: For *They only* were ſo in the ſpiritual and *religious* ſenſe, who in *Practice*, not who in *Profeſſion*, ſerved the true God. *Gal.* iii. 28; and *Col.* iii. 11. *There is neither Jew, nor Greek; there is neither male, nor female; neither Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Chriſt,*

(that

SERM. XXII.

(that is, Obedience, to Chriſt,) *is all in all.* And ch. v. 6; and 1 *Cor.* vii. 19. *Circumciſion is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing, but the Keeping of the Commandments of God.* And the ſame is fully expreſſed in that declaration of *John the Baptiſt*, when he ſays, that even out of the *Stones of the ſtreet, God could raiſe up children unto Abraham:* Children unto *Him*, in the ſpiritual and beſt ſenſe, who for his exemplary obedience had this Teſtimony given him, that he is *called* in Scripture, (*Rom.* iv. 16.) *the Father of the Faithful.*

Now from this Account which has been given of the *true* Nature of *Love towards God*; it will be eaſy for us to correct the Errors, which Men have ſometimes fallen into in both Extremes. *Some* have been very confident of their Love *towards God*, from a meer warmth of ſuperſtitious zeal and enthuſiaſtick affection, without any great care to bring forth in their Lives the Fruits of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. And the Error of *theſe men* may be corrected, by conſidering, that God being eſſentially juſt and good, holy and true, and of all other moral Perfections; 'tis conſequently evident, that unleſs they conſider him under *Theſe Characters* which are inſeparable from his Nature, and unleſs they accordingly love (and themſelves imitate) theſe Virtues; 'tis not *God* whom they are zealous for, but a mere *abſtract Notion*, a *Phantom* only of their own Imagination.

On the contrary; Others there are, who though they really *love*, and fear, and ſerve God, in the courſe of a virtuous and religious life; yet, becauſe they feel not in themſelves that *warmth* of affection, which many Enthuſiaſts pretend to; therefore they are afraid and ſuſpect, that they do not *love* God ſincerely, as they ought. Now the Errour of theſe pious perſons is to be corrected, by conſidering, that there is *no* other Mark ſo infallible of the Goodneſs of a Tree, as the *Fruit* which it brings forth. If they live in *Obedience* to the Commands of God, they need *no other* evidence of the Sincerity of their Hearts towards him: For all *other* Signs may poſſibly be erroneous; but *This*, is the *very thing ſignified* itſelf. Love of *Goodneſs*, *Righteouſneſs*, *and Truth*, is Love of *God*: For *God* is *Goodneſs and Truth:* And He who loves theſe Virtues, which are the moral Perfections of the divine Nature, does therefore love God moſt perfectly; becauſe he loves *thoſe* Excellencies, for the *Sake* of which God expects that we ſhould love him above all things.

But further, There are *Some* perſons of This ſort, who are fearful that their Love towards God is not entire and perfect, and that they do not love God as the chief Good, if they obey and ſerve him for the hope of *Reward.* But This alſo is a great miſtake: For *as* Happineſs, no leſs than *Holineſs*, is *eſſential* in the divine Nature; *ſo* in all *inferiour* Beings, the proper Reward *of Virtue* is inſeparably deſirable with *Virtue itſelf*: And not the Deſire of *Heaven*, which is the Perfection of Virtue; but only the Deſire of Sinful *Pleaſure*, which is deſtructive of Virtue, is inconſiſtent with, and diminiſhes from, our *Love of God.* The Scripture expreſly declares, that he who cometh to God, not only *may*, but *muſt* believe him to be a *Rewarder* of them that diligently ſeek him: That *Abraham* accordingly, That great Father of the Faithful, *looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*: That *Moſes*, had *reſpect unto the recompence of Reward:* That the *Martyrs* ſuffered in hope, *that they might obtain a better Reſurrection:* That our *Lord himſelf*, endured the Croſs, *for the joy that was ſet before him:* And that the *end* of All good mens *faith* is *the Salvation of their Souls*, even *joy unſpeakable and full* of *Glory.* The *Hope of* which *Joy*, the Apoſtle in That very Verſe, not only ſuppoſes to be *conſiſtent with*, but ſpeaks of it as being, *itſelf*, our *Love of Chriſt.*

Heb. xi. 6. Ver. 10, 14. Ver. 26. Ver. 35. ch. xii. 2. 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

II. Having thus at large explained the *Duty* injoined in the Text, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God*: I proceed now in the 2*d* place, to conſider briefly the *Circumſtances* requiſite, to make the performance of this Duty *acceptable and complete*: Thou ſhalt love him *with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.* In St. *Luke* it is, ſomewhat *more diſtinctly*; with all thy *Heart*, with all thy *Soul*, with all thy *Strength*, and with all thy *Mind.* Which words, though ſometimes indeed uſed *promiſcuouſly*, yet when thus put together in *Order*, ſeem intended to expreſs after a more *diſtinct* manner, the requiſite *Circumſtances* of That *Obedience*, which is the proper Evidence of our Love towards God. And

x. 27.

1*ſt*,

SERM. XXII.

1*ſt*, It muſt be *Sincere*: We muſt love or obey him with all our Heart. 'Tis not the *external Action* only, but the *inward affection of the* Mind principally, that God regards: An affection of Mind, which influences all a man's actions *in ſecret*, as well as *in publick*; which determines the perſon's *true* Character, or denomination; and diſtinguiſhes *him* who really *is* a Servant of God, from *him* who only *ſeems* or *appears* to be ſo. It was the character of the *Jews* of *old*, and is *now* of too great a part of Chriſtians, *Ezek.* xxxiii. 31. *With their* Mouth *this people ſhews much Love, but their* Heart *goeth after their Covetouſneſs*; i. e. after their Sinful Pleaſures. Mat. vi.

2*dly*, Our Obedience muſt be *Univerſal*: We muſt love God with all our Soul, or with our whole *Soul*. *He* does not love God, in the Scripture-ſenſe; who obeys him in *ſome* inſtances only and not in *all*. *No man*, ſays our Saviour, *can ſerve two maſters:* And, *if any man love the* World, *the love of the* Father *is not in him*, 1 Joh. ii. 15. And *Jam.* iv. 4. *Whoſoever will be a Friend of the* World, *is the Enemy of* God. The meaning of theſe paſſages, is not, that he who Truly loves *God*, muſt conſequently *wholly neglect*, and have *no regard at all* to any thing elſe; but, that nothing elſe muſt *ſo* poſſeſs our affections as to *interfere* with our Duty, when they come in competition, and thereby render our Hearts (as the Scripture expreſſes it,) *not right* or *not whole* with the Lord. Thus *Saul* was tempted to ſpare the *beſt* of the *Amalekite*'s Goods, expreſly contrary to God's Command: And the *Jews*, under Pretence of the *Corban*, of giving ſomewhat to the ſervice of the *Temple*, excuſed themſelves from providing for their neceſſitous *Parents*: And *Many* who have zealouſly *taught* the doctrine of Chriſt, ſhall at the day of Judgment be bid to *depart from him*, becauſe they have allowed themſelves in the practice of ſome unforſaken *iniquities*. The Pſalmiſt places his confidence in *This* only, that he *had reſpect unto* All *God's commandments*, Pſ. cxix. 6. Generally ſpeaking, moſt men's Temptation lies principally in ſome *One Particular* Inſtance: And *This* is the proper *Tryal* of the perſon's *Obedience*, or of his *Love* towards God. If he overcomes in *This* inſtance, then may he *have confidence towards God*; But if he fails *here*, and *continues* ſo to do, he is guilty of *all*. By forſaking the Sin that *moſt eaſily* beſets us, we muſt endeavour to improve daily and grow in grace; aiming at the character given in the Goſpel to *Zacharias*, that he was *perfect*, *walking in* all *the Commandments of the Lord blameleſs*. The meaning is; not that our Obedience can in this life be *indeed ſinleſs*; but that we muſt be *ſincere* in endeavouring to avoid *all Sin*, according to the meaſure and poſſibilities of our *preſent* frailty; till at laſt we be preſented really *faultleſs*, *before the preſence of his glory*, *with exceeding Joy*. Mat. vi. 24.

3*dly*, Our Obedience muſt be *conſtant* and *perſevering in* Time, as well as *Univerſal* in its *Extent:* We muſt love God with all our Strength; *perſevering* in our Duty, *without fainting*. *He that endureth to the* end, ſaith our Saviour, *the ſame ſhall be ſaved*; and *He that* overcometh, *ſhall inherit all things*; and, *we are made partakers of Chriſt*, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence ſtedfaſt unto the* end. The Scripture-notion of Obedience is, walking *in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him* all the days of our life, *Luk.* i. 75. The meaning is, not ſo as never to fall into any *Sin*, but ſo as never to apoſtatize from our Duty by falling finally into *any* courſe *of Sin*. *The juſt ſhall live by faith*; *but if any man draw back*, ſays God, *my Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him*. For Chriſtianity is a *warfare*, wherein we muſt *not only fight*, but *ſo* fight as to *overcome*; and a *race*, wherein we muſt *not only run*, but *ſo* run as to *obtain*.

4*thly*, Our Obedience to God, ought to be *willing and chearful:* We muſt love him with all our Mind. *Pſ.* v. 12. *They that love thy Name*, *will be* joyful *in thee:* And St. *Paul*, among the fruits of the Spirit, reckons up peace, and joy *in the Holy Ghoſt*. Nevertheleſs, This ought not to be matter of ſcruple to any *weak* and ſincere mind: For Obedience to the Commands of God, *whatever* principle it proceeds from, even though it be but *Fear* only, will be accepted unto Salvation. But Virtue becomes *more perfect*, when 'tis made eaſy by Love, and by habitual Practice incorporated as it were into a man's very nature and temper. For ſo the Scripture repreſents *Angels*, as *rejoicing* and *delighting* to perform their Lord's pleaſure; And our Saviour declares that 'twas his *meat and drink* to do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven. Which Examples when we can in any *tolerable* degree imitate, then is fulfilled in us the obſervation of St. *John*, that *perfect* 1 Joh. iv. 18.

SERM. XXII.

perfect Love caſteth out Fear; and That of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* viii. 15. that *we have not received the Spirit of bondage to Fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; and 2 *Tim.* i. 7. *God hath not given us the Spirit of* fear, *but of* love, *and of a ſound mind.*

Theſe are the *Circumſtances* requiſite to make the performance of this Duty acceptable and complete: We muſt love the Lord our God, with all our *Heart*, with all our *Soul*, with all our *Strength*, and with all our *Mind*. The

IIId and laſt thing obſervable in the Text, is the *Weight and Importance* of the Duty; It is the *Firſt and great Commandment*. The Reaſon is, becauſe 'tis the *Foundation of all*; and, without *Regard to God*, there can be *no Religion*. Not that Virtue, at *any* time, or in *any* perſon whatſoever, can be *not praiſe-worthy*; much leſs, that in thoſe who have *not* a right knowledge of God, even virtuous Actions themſelves are (as ſome have very *unreaſonably* affirmed) only *ſplendid Sins*; but that there is no *ſecurity*, no certain *depending* upon ſuch virtues, as ariſe merely accidentally from *natural goodneſs of Temper*, and are not built upon a firm and ſettled perſwaſion, that God does Now govern, and will finally judge the World. The Houſe is good; but it is built (according to our Saviour's compariſon) upon the *Sand only*, and not upon a *Rock*. 'Tis *Faith* only that *overcomes the World:* Nothing but a ſteddy Belief of a Judgment to come, and of God's being a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, can be effectual to conquer the Temptations of Sin. *This* Faith therefore, that we may all hold faſt, God of his infinite Mercy grant, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON XXIII.

Of the FEAR of GOD.

JOB xxiii. 15.

Therefore am I troubled at his presence: When I consider, I am afraid of him.

IN This Chapter *Job* gives a noble Description of the Sense he had upon his Mind, of the invisible Omnipresence and Omniscience of God. Ver. 8. *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take.* To a man of Virtue and Integrity, the consideration of This great Truth is a solid Ground of real and lasting Satisfaction. *He knoweth the way that I take —— My foot hath held his steps; his way have I kept, and not declined: Neither have I gone back from the Commandment of his Lips: I have esteemed the Words of his Mouth, more than my necessary Food*, ver. 11. In times of *Affliction* particularly, 'tis an inexpressible Support, if a man can be able to say with this exemplary person, ver. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his Seat! I would order my Cause before him, and fill my Mouth with Arguments. —— Will he plead against me with his great Power? No; but he would put Strength in me. —— He knoweth the Way that I take: When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as Gold.* Nevertheless, though the Hope signified by these high Expressions, is indeed a well-grounded Hope, and what the Apostle St. *John* calls, an *assuring* of *our Hearts before God*; Yet considering the infinite Purity of the Divine Nature, and the Frail-

SERM. XXIII.

1 Joh. iii. 19.

SERM. XXIII.

1 Cor. iv. 4.

Frailneſs of this our mortal State, and the unprofitableneſs even of our beſt Services, and our aptneſs to impoſe upon ourſelves, and to deceive through careleſſneſs even our Own Hearts; ſo that though a man be not conſcious to himſelf of any Great Wickedneſs, yet is he *not hereby juſtified, but he that juſtifies* him, *is the Lord*; And conſidering alſo, that in the nature of Things, there cannot but be many Secrets in the Diſpenſations of Providence, and in God's Government of the Univerſe, unſearchable to our ſhort and limited Underſtandings; 'Tis not without great reaſon that *Job* immediately corrects himſelf in the words next following; ver. 13. *But he is in One Mind, and who can turn him? — For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many ſuch things are with him. Therefore am I troubled at his preſence; when I conſider, I am afraid of him.* The Expreſſions are of the ſame import, as thoſe in the *Ninth* chapter, ver. 11; *Lo, he goeth by me, and I ſee him not; he paſſeth on alſo, but I perceive him not. Behold, he taketh away; who can hinder him? Who will ſay unto him, what doſt thou? — Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not anſwer; but I would make Supplication to my Judge.*

The words of my Text; *I am troubled at his Preſence; when I conſider, I am afraid of him*; have, in the place, they ſtand, a *particular* Reference to *Theſe* Conſiderations. But I ſhall take them at this time in their *larger* ſenſe, as containing this more *general* and very important Propoſition; that the *Fear of God* is the Reſult of *Conſideration*, the Reſult of *Attention*, and true *Reaſon*; not of empty *Imagination*, and vain *Apprehenſions*. *When I conſider, I am afraid of him.*

By the *Fear of God*, I would be underſtood to mean, not the Superſtitious *Dread* of an *arbitrary* or *cruel* Being; but That *Awe* and *Regard*, which neceſſarily ariſes in the Mind of every man, who believes and habitually conſiders himſelf as living and acting in the ſight of an Omnipreſent Governour of perfect Juſtice, Holineſs and Purity; who ſees every Thought, as well as every Action; who cannot be impoſed upon by Any Hypocriſy; who, as certainly as there is any Difference between Good and Evil, cannot but approve the one, and deteſt the other; and whoſe Government, as certainly as he has any Power at all, conſiſts in rewarding what he approves, and puniſhing what he hates. Of ſuch a Governour as This, though we are ſure he is indued with infinite Goodneſs, yet may it juſtly be ſaid, with the greateſt Reaſon, and without any tendency to Superſtition; *When I conſider, I am afraid of him.*

This *Fear of God*, is the *Foundation* of *Religion*. For though Virtue *is* indeed amiable, *abſolutely*, in its own Nature; and, if the World could poſſibly be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt without the *Government*, and even without the *Being* of God, ſtill the nature of *Good and Evil* would be what it is, and Virtue would be *in itſelf* unalterably excellent, and Vice for ever blame-worthy; Yet the great *Support* of Virtue among *Men*, is the Senſe upon their Minds of a Supreme Governour and Judge of the Univerſe, who will finally and effectually *reward* what is in itſelf eſſentially *worthy of reward*, and *puniſh* what is *worthy of puniſhment*. To a *perfect* and *unerring* Mind, incapable of being deceived, and which is exalted above all poſſible temptation; to ſuch a one, the *intrinſic Reaſon* of Things, the *eſſential Excellency* of Truth and Right, is in itſelf a ſteady and always ſufficient Motive of Action. But *Men*; who, when they *know* what is Right, and neceſſarily *approve* it, yet at the ſame time find *another Law in their Members warring againſt the Law of their Mind*, urging them with ſtrong *Paſſions*, and uneaſy *Appetites*; and theſe ſollicited moreover with perpetual Temptations from *without*, with Allurements of *Pleaſure* and *Profit*, with *Baits* of *Power* and *Ambition*, with *Examples* of a degenerate and corrupt World, and with *Threatnings* alſo of perpetual *Perſecutions* in different kinds, if they adhere ſtedfaſtly to the Intereſts of Truth and Virtue: To *ſuch* Beings as theſe, I ſay; to finite, changeable and fallible Creatures; 'tis very neceſſary, that the *eternal intrinſic Reaſon of Things*, the *eſſential and unalterable Excellency of Truth and Right*, conſidered as a *Motive* of Action, ſhould be *ſupported* and *ſtrengthened* by a conſtant and lively Senſe upon their Minds, of an univerſal Supreme Governour; who being eſſentially the Fountain of all Per-

Perfection, the *Truth and Reason of Things* and the *unalterable Right of every Case* are consequently the eternal *Laws* of his Kingdom: Which, by his universal Power and Government over all, he will as certainly support and maintain; finally rewarding Virtue, and punishing Vice; as 'tis certain there *Is* a Difference between Good and Evil, and that infinite Wisdom cannot be *insensible* of That Difference. A firm and settled Persuasion of the reality and certainty of this great Truth, that we are continually under the inspection of *such* a Supreme Governour and Judge; of an omnipresent Spirit, *in whom we live and move and have our Being*, and to whom our very Thoughts are open as our Actions; cannot but fill the mind of every *considerate* Person, with a just Awe and *Fear* of him: *When I consider, I am afraid of him*: Afraid, not as of an arbitrary and tyrannical Power; but as of a just and powerful and wise Governour, whose Laws are reasonable and necessary to be obeyed, and from whose just displeasure the Disobedient can by No Power or Artifice be protected. SERM. XXIII.

The *Ground* of *This Fear*, the Text tells us, is *Reason and Consideration: When I* Consider, *I am afraid of him.* Atheistical and profane men suppose on the *contrary*, that the *Ground* of this Fear is *Timorousness of Temper*, *Superstition*, *Customary Tradition*, or *political Fiction.* 'Tis of infinitely great Moment, to determine *which* of these two is the *Truth*; And therefore I shall consider distinctly the very different *Grounds*, *Characters*, and *Effects*, of *Religion* and *Superstition*; and how these Two things, which atheistical and corrupt Minds would fain imagine to be the same, may be *distinguished* from each other.

1. In the *first* place, as to the *Ground* and *Foundation* of Religion. That there is an essential Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice, is what every man as clearly discerns by the natural and necessary Perception of his own Mind and Conscience, as his Eyes see the Difference between Light and Darkness. 'Tis not a man's *particular Timorousness of Temper*, 'tis not *Customary Tradition* from his *Ancestors*, 'tis not the *imaginary Speculation* of *Philosophers*, 'tis not the *political Fiction* of *Governours*, that makes him see when he is *oppressed*, *defrauded*, *cheated*, treated *unjustly* and *injuriously*; that these *Actions* are in their own nature *unrighteous*, and the *Person* who is guilty of them *worthy of Punishment*. Every man, of every degree of capacity, in every Age, and in every Nation, sees and feels this to be the Truth of Things; And no *accidental Variety of Temper*, no *Tradition*, no *Philosophy*, no *Form of Government*, can either *alter* or *abolish* these Notions. The *Reasonings* and *Speculations* of *Men* do not *make* things to be what they are; but only help men to *discover* with greater Clearness, or to a greater degree, what their *real intrinsic* Natures are. *Laws* likewise, do not *make* Virtue to be Virtue, or Vice to be Vice; but only *inforce* or *discourage* the Practice of such things, as the very *making of a Law* always and necessarily *presupposes* to have been Fit or Unfit *before* the making of the Law: Because otherwise *all Laws* about *moral* matters would be *professedly* to *no Purpose*, and of *no* Use. There *may* perhaps be in some *Men*, and possibly in some whole *Nations*, for want of Attention and Consideration, a very great degree of *Ignorance*, in many *particular Instances*, of this natural and essential difference of Good and Evil; (Though, I believe, no Person, who had at all the use of his Reason, ever was so *universally* ignorant, as not to dislike and think *really blame-worthy* a wilful *Breach of Faith*, or an Act of *causeless Cruelty*.) But the *Ignorance*, be it in what degree it will, either of any *Man* or of any *Number of men*, makes no alteration at all in the *Nature* and Truth of *Things*; nor affords any Argument, against the *reality* of their *essential Differences*. Were there in nature *no real* and *unalterable* Difference between Moral Good and Evil; it would follow, not only that whole Nations might possibly be *ignorant* of This Distinction; which is nothing to the purpose: (For so they may be of the plainest Mathematical Truths, and yet those Truths not be at all the less certain:) But it would follow, that whole Nations might as *possibly*, with a full persuasion within themselves of the Strength and Clearness of their manner of reasoning and arguing, determine in all instances universally Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue, as *We* think we with reason determine the contrary: Nay, it would be as *easy*, and as *natural*, and as *probable* they should so determine, as that Nations should differ in the *Fashion* or *Colour* of their *Cloaths*, or in any other Circumstances of things by nature indifferent. Which since no man (I think) has ever been so absurd as to affirm;

SERM. XXIII.

it follows undeniably, that That First *Ground* and *Foundation* of *Religion*, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, is laid *immutably* and *universally* in the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things: Whereas all *Superstitions*, various always as the Motion of the Winds and Clouds, are notoriously founded only in *accidental Temper*, *customary Tradition*, or *political Fiction*.

Again: That there is an *invisible Power* presiding over the Universe, (which is *Another* part of the prime *Ground* and *Foundation* of Religion;) The Belief, I say, of an *invisible Power* ruling over the Universe, and which will finally *support* Virtue and *punish* Wickedness, is a Belief arising from *Reason and Consideration*; which is directly contrary to the Essence of *Superstition*. The *visible Works* of Nature, every man by his own experience every day perceives evidently to be the Effects of an *invisible Power*. The more *extensive*, and the more *exact*, any man's Observations are, the *more* Evidences he continually finds of the *reality*, and of the *Greatness*, of this *invisible Power*: But even to the *meanest Capacities*, and in the most *obvious Occurrences* of life, God has by no means *left himself without Witness*, *causing his Sun*
Matt. v. 45. *to shine, and sending us Rain and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness*.
Acts xiv. 17. The *Marvellousness* of the Works of Nature shows the *Greatness* of this Power; and the *Regularity* and *Uniformity* of them shows it to be the Power of *One and the Same* Agent, acting or directing every where. The *Understanding* of this universal Governour, which is sufficient to direct the whole Frame of *Nature*, cannot be insensible of that Difference of *Moral* Good and Evil, which even to *Us* appears necessarily and essentially demonstrable. To expect therefore that this Supreme Being will judge according to *Right*, that is, according to the *necessary nature* of Things; In other words, To *fear* that he will punish us if we act unreasonably, and to *hope* for his Favour if we be Followers of Truth and Right; is the Voice of *Reason*, and not of *Superstition*.

Superstitious Apprehensions, arising in *particular* from *Timorousness of Temper*, teach men to fear they know not *what*, or to be afraid of *God* they know not *why*; to *fear* him, not as a *just and righteous Judge*, but merely as vested with *irresistible Power*; to *fear* him, not so as by That Fear to be deterred from unrighteous Practices, but so as to be perpetually commuting for a vicious Life with the repetition of unprofitable Ceremonies without number. *Superstitions* founded upon *Customary Tradition*, teach men to be afraid of things which have *no existence*; or of *Beings* which have *no Power and Dominion* over us; to place *Religion* in Practices which have *no* Tendency to *Virtue*; to lay Stress upon *Opinions*, which have no *Sense*, or no *Truth* in them; upon things, whereof no man can give a rational Account, or,
1 Pet. 3. 15. in St. *Peter*'s language, *give an Answer to* any one *that asketh a Reason of the Hope*, or of the *Fear*, *that is in him*. *Superstitions* derived from *political Fiction*, teach men to make *Religion*, consist in *Parties and Factions*; in things which, in *different countries*, are contrary to each other, and, in the *same country*, contrary at *different Times*; in things which promote not at all the Honour of *God*, nor universal Meekness and Good-will towards *Men*; but on the contrary, sometimes are directly *destructive* both of *Truth* and *Charity*.

Instances of *all* these several kinds of Superstitions in the *Heathen* World, were their worshipping of *fictitious* Deities, instead of the Great God and Governour of the Universe, of whom by the Light of Nature and Reason they were not ignorant: And more particularly, their mixing sometimes *barbarous* and *cruel*, sometimes *beastly* and *impure* Rites, even amongst their sacred and religious Performances. In the *Jewish* Nation, the general and prevailing Superstition always was, their relying upon outward *Forms* and *Ceremonies*, (which ought *not* indeed
Mat. 23. 23. to be left undone,) and laying the stress of Religion upon *them*, more than upon *the weightier matters of* the *Law*, Justice, Mercy, and Fidelity; of which, all *external* Purifications were but Shadows and Memorials. In the *Christian* World, Instances of no less shameful Superstitions, are, mens departing from *the Everlasting Gospel*, which requires us (*Rev.* xiv. 6, 7.) to *worship him that made Heaven and Earth*; and setting up the Worship of the *Host*, and of the *Blessed Virgin*, and of *Angels*, and *Saints*, and *Relicks*, and *Images*: Also relying upon *Indulgences*, *Pilgrimages*, *Processions*, *Masses for the Dead*, and the like: Nay, and upon the most ridiculously extravagant *Absurdities* in *Belief*; and the most *inhuman Persecutions and Barbarities* in *Practice*. All which things have no Foundation in *Reason*, nor

any

any Appearance of being commanded of *God*. The true *Religion of Chriſt*, as taught by Himſelf and his Apoſtles, has nothing of This Sort in it; requiring nothing of us, but This moſt *reaſonable Service*, that, in expectation of a righteous Judgment to come, we continually *worſhip* the *God of the Univerſe*; living in *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Charity towards All men*; and making conſtant *Acknowledgments* of the Divine *Goodneſs and Compaſſion*, in receiving *Sinners* to *Repentance* through the *Attonement* and *Interceſſion* of Chriſt. Than which Doctrine, nothing can be more *firm* in its *Foundation*, or more *excellent* in its *Effects*. SERM. XXIII.

2. And This is the *Second* great or characteriſtick Mark, by which *Religion* and *Superſtition* may be *diſtinguiſhed* from each other. As they differ entirely in their *Ground and Foundation*, ſo do they likewiſe in their *Effects*. *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them*, Matt. vii. 20. *Religion*, which is founded in *Truth*, always makes men impartially *inquiſitive* after *Truth*, Lovers of *Reaſon*, *Meek*, *Gentle*, *Patient*, *Willing* to be *informed*: *Superſtition*, on the contrary, naturally makes men *blind* and *paſſionate*, deſpiſers of *Reaſon*, *careleſs* in *inquiring* after *Truth*, *Haſty*; *Cenſorious*, *Contentious*, and *Impatient of inſtruction*. *Religion* teaches men to be exactly *juſt*, *equitable*, and *charitable* towards all men: *Superſtition*, on the contrary, frequently puts men upon undervaluing the eternal Rules of *Morality*, and upon preferring the Intereſt of particular *Sects and Parties*, the prevalency of ſome *uncertain Opinions*, and the practice of ſome *needleſs Ceremonies*, before the unalterable Precepts of the *everlaſting Law* and the *everlaſting Goſpel*. Laſtly, True *Religion*, the Religion of *Nature* in general, and the Religion of *Chriſt* in particular, by ſecuring the Belief of a *future Judgment*, tends greatly to promote the Happineſs of *Nations* and *good Governments*, in obliging the *Conſciences* of men to *real Fidelity*, *Juſtice*, and the *ſincere Practice* of *every Virtue*, which the *very beſt human Laws* can but *imperfectly* ſecure, by compelling merely the *External* Action: But *Superſtition*, on the contrary, frequently produces *Wars*, and *Tumults*, and *Perſecutions*, and *Tyrannies* without end; there being nothing ſo *wicked*, which men of *Superſtitious Principles* will not think *pious* and *neceſſary*, and which men of *No Principles* will not upon occaſion bring themſelves to ſubmit to.

I ſhall conclude This Head, with obſerving that there are *Two* Particulars, wherein *True Religion*, the Religion taught by *Chriſt himſelf*, (for the Religion profeſſed by many Nations who *call* themſelves *Chriſtian*, is palpably nothing but *Superſtition*;) the *true* Religion, I ſay, as taught by *Chriſt himſelf*, has in *Two* Particulars principally, by men who receive not the Goſpel, been objected to as encouraging *Superſtition*. One is, that it teaches men to be *obſtinate* and *wilful*, in parting with all Advantages, even with *Life* itſelf, for the ſake of Religion. The Other is, that by teaching men to *deſpiſe* the *World*, it hinders them from attending to the *Good of the Publick*. But the Anſwer to Both theſe Objections is not difficult. Without a *ſtedfaſtneſs* which cannot be moved by Temporal Inconveniencies, there is *no Virtue* to be depended upon, in *natural* Religion, any more than in *Chriſtian*: Is therefore *All Virtue*, nothing but *Superſtition*? And as to *deſpiſing* the *World*, in the Senſe of *withdrawing from* the *Buſineſs* of the World, Chriſtianity no where teaches this, but only in Times and Places of general *Perſecution*. In *Other* Caſes, deſpiſing the *World*, does not ſignify deſpiſing the *Buſineſs* of the World, or neglecting to attend the *Publick Good*, but deſpiſing all Temptations to the *Wickedneſs* of the World, the Temptations of *lawleſs* Pleaſure, the Temptations of *unjuſt Gains*, the Temptations of *corrupt Ambition*. Theſe only, are, in the Scripture-ſenſe, That *World* which is an Enemy to God.

SERMON

SERMON XXIV.

Of the WISDOM of being Religious.

PROV. ix. 10, 11.

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding; For by me thy days ſhall be multiplied, and the years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.

SERM. XXIV.

THERE is no Deſire which God has ſo deeply fixed and implanted in in our Nature, as that of Preſerving and Prolonging our Life. Life and Health, are the Foundation of all other enjoyments: and are therefore of greater value than all other Poſſeſſions put together, becauſe they are neceſſary in order to the Enjoyment of thoſe Poſſeſſions; And without Theſe, all other things that are the Objects of Men's Hopes and Deſires in the World, have with regard to Us, no Being, no Subſiſtence. *For, what ſhall it profit a man, if he gain the whole World, and loſe his own Life? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Life?* The principal Point of Wiſdom therefore in the Conduct of Human Life, is ſo to uſe the enjoyments of this preſent World, as that they may not themſelves ſhorten that Period, wherein 'tis allowed us to enjoy them. And if any part of Knowledge deſerves a ſteddier attention than another, and has of all others the juſteſt pretence to be eſteemed invaluable; 'tis unqueſtionable *That* Knowledge, by which, as the Wiſeman here expreſſes it, our *days* may *be multiplied, and the Years of our Life* may *be increaſed.*

Let

SERM. XXIV.

Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die; was the reaſoning of the Epicure, mentioned by St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 32. But it was very falſe reaſoning, to make the melancholy conſideration of the Shortneſs of Life an Argument for Debauchery, when that very Debauchery is evidently the Cauſe of making Man's Life ſtill ſhorter. Temperance and Sobriety, the regular Government of our Appetites and Paſſions, the promoting Peace and good Order in the World, are, even *without* regard to any Arguments of Religion, the greateſt inſtances of Human Wiſdom; becauſe they are the moſt effectual means of preſerving our Being, and Well-being in the World; of prolonging the Period, and inlarging the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. *Religion*, has added Strength to theſe Conſiderations; and, by annexing the Promiſe of God's immediate Bleſſing to the natural Tendency and Conſequences of Things, has made the Wiſdom of chooſing Virtue infinitely more conſpicuous; and the Folly of Vice more apparently abſurd. *Length of Days* upon *Earth*, is in the *old Teſtament* frequently promiſed to the *Righteous*; And the principal intent of that Promiſe, was to be an Emblem or Signification of a *longer Life*, even of *Eternity*, more expreſly promiſed in the *New*. The Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, the true Land of Promiſe; And the *days* of the righteous being *long in the Land which the Lord their God had given them*, was a figurative præſignification of that future and more complete State of Happineſs, wherein their *days ſhould be multiplied* without number, and *the years of their Life ſhould be increaſed without End*. This is a Demonſtration *indeed*, of the Wiſdom of being Religious; and of the happy Effects of having always before our Eyes the Fear of the Lord. *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding; For by me thy Days ſhall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.*

The Fear of the Lord, and the *Knowledge of the Holy*, are two ſynonymous Expreſſions, each of which ſignifies in Scripture Phraſe, *the Practice of Virtue and true Religion*. For ſo it is very uſual in all good Authors, to expreſs the *Whole* by ſome *principal Part*. Thus, when 'tis ſaid, *The* Soul *that ſinneth, it ſhall die*; becauſe the Soul is the principal and moſt excellent part of Man, 'tis of the ſame import, as if it had been expreſſed, *The* Man *that ſinneth, ſhall die*. And *Gen.* xlvi. 27. *All the* Souls *of the Houſe of Jacob which came into Egypt*; that is, all the *Perſons*, *were threeſcore and ten*. In like manner, becauſe the *Fear* or *Love* of God, the *Knowledge* or *Study* of his Will, *Faith* or *Truſt* in him, the *Remembrance* of him, or *frequent Meditating* upon his Laws, are *principal Parts* of Religion; and ſuch as are apt to have ſo great an influence upon Men, that One of theſe Virtues can hardly be ſuppoſed to be found any where ſeparate from the reſt, or without producing its true and genuine Effects in the general courſe of a religious and Holy Life; therefore *each* of theſe are frequently put *ſingly* in Scripture for the *Whole* of Religion, and to expreſs the Practice of Virtue in general. Thus, to Remember our *Creator in the days of* our *Youth*, is the Wiſeman's deſcription of an early Piety; and with *the Wicked* that ſhall *be turned into Hell*, in the Pſalmiſt's language, are joined *all the Nations that* forget *God*. In like manner *Believers*, or they that have *Faith* in God, ſignifies always in the *New Teſtament good Chriſtians*, or ſuch as are endued with *all* virtues and graces of the Spirit; and on the contrary *every* kind of *Wickedneſs*, as well as *Infidelity*, is repreſented under the Character of *Unbelief*. The Love *of God*, is by St. *John* and by our Saviour himſelf, defined to be *this, that we keep his Commandments*, 1 Joh. v. 3; and Joh. xiv. 15. The *Knowledge* of God, is in the writings of the ſame Apoſtle explained by the very ſame Phraſe of *keeping his Commandments*, 1 Joh. ii. 3, 4: and they that know not *God*, are by St. *Paul* deſcribed as Perſons nothing differing from thoſe *that obey not the Goſpel*. 2 Th. i. 8. Laſtly, Becauſe *Fear* is of all other Paſſions the moſt deeply rooted in our Nature; and is more apt to be ſtrongly moved by Apprehenſions of the Divine diſpleaſure, than the milder Paſſions of Deſire and Hope are to be worked upon by Repreſentations of the Excellency of Virtue and of the Greatneſs of its Reward; therefore the Fear *of God* is the *moſt* frequently of all theſe figurative Expreſſions, put in Scripture for the Whole of Religion; and Perſons of Univerſal Piety and remarkable Holineſs, are by no character more uſually deſcribed than by This, that they fear *the Lord*, or *have the*

SERM. XXIV.

Fear *of God before their Eyes*. And becauſe *each one* of theſe Phraſes ſingly, ſignifies thus, properly enough, the *Sum of Religion*; therefore *any Two* of them may likewiſe be uſed as ſynonomous to *each other*; As, in the Text, the *Fear* and the *Knowledge* of the Lord: *The* Fear *of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom, and the* Knowledge *of the Holy is Underſtanding*; *For by me thy Days ſhall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.*

In the Words we may obſerve,

1*ſt*, That the Practice of Religion is *in general* Man's trueſt Wiſdom: *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of* Wiſdom; *and the Knowledge of the Holy is* Underſtanding.

2*dly*, That the Practice of Religion is *in particular* Wiſe in *this reſpect*, that it tends to prolong our Life and lengthen our days: *For by Me thy Days ſhall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.* And

3*dly*, It may be reaſonable to inquire, how far this Bleſſing of long Life promiſed to Obedience under the *Old Teſtament*, is proper to be deſired by Chriſtians under the Goſpel-State.

1*ſt*, The Words contain this univerſal Propoſition; That *the Practice of Religion is* in general *Man's trueſt* Wiſdom: The *Fear of the Lord is the beginning of* Wiſdom, *and the Knowledge of the Holy is Underſtanding*. And here the whole Tenor of Scripture, in Conjunction with the Reaſon of Things, concurs in ſetting forth the Wiſdom of being virtuous and religious. The Books of *Solomon* eſpecially, whoſe *Human* Judgment was ſuperior to all others, even ſeparate from his Knowledge in things *Divine*, are ſo full of this Notion; that, throughout all his Writings, the Words ſeem never to be uſed in any other Signification, but that Wiſdom is always put for true Virtue and Piety, and Folly or Madneſs for the Habit of Sin. As if there were *no other* Folly in the World, but that of Wickedneſs; nor *any* true Wiſdom, but that of Religion; becauſe, in the *comparative* Senſe, no other things ſo *eminently* deſerve thoſe Names. And indeed, if Wiſdom conſiſts in ſtudying thoſe things which are of the greateſt Uſe and Neceſſity for us to Know; If it be wiſe to imploy our Thoughts about things *in their own Nature* the moſt Excellent, and, in *their relation to us*, of the utmoſt importance; If it be Wiſe to purſue the nobleſt *Ends*, and in the purſuit thereof to uſe the beſt and propereſt *Means*; If it be Wiſe to conſult our own real Happineſs; and to be more concerned for the improvement of our Minds in practical Knowledge, than for amuſing them with vain and empty Speculations; If Eternity be of more Importance than Time, and a never-ceaſing Duration than a tranſitory Moment; If the Favour of God be infinitely more valuable than the Friendſhip of the World; and it be more adviſable to pleaſe an Almighty Benefactor, than mortal Men whoſe Breath is in their Noſtrils; If Joy and Satisfaction of Mind be truly more deſirable, than endleſs Anxiety, Horror and Deſpair; If Peace and Love, Charity and univerſal Good Will, be more eligible than Wars, Confuſions and Deſolations; and it be wiſer to promote the Happineſs of the World, than that Men ſhould make each other miſerable without Cauſe and without End; In a word; If Wiſdom conſiſts in knowing and diſtinguiſhing, in chooſing and in adhering to, *whatſoever things are true*, —— *honeſt*, —— *juſt*, —— *pure*, —— *lovely*, —— *of good report*; things that promote the Health of our Bodies, and ſecure the Peace and Quiet of our Minds; things that eſtabliſh the Order of the World, and make other Men Happy as well as ourſelves; things that make our preſent enjoyments, eaſy, and the remembrance of what is paſt, comfortable; and the Hopes and Expectations of what is to come, ſecure; If the chooſing *Theſe* things, be the Part of a Wiſe Man; then is Religion evidently Man's trueſt Wiſdom. For where are theſe things to be found, but in the Practice of Virtue and true Religion?

There *is* a Wiſdom in the underſtanding of *Arts* and uſeful *Sciences*, which are beneficial to Mankind in this preſent State, and are in Scripture aſcribed to the inſpiration of the Almighty: But *this* is a Wiſdom confined to particular Perſons, and its uſefulneſs limited to a very ſhort Duration. There *is* a Wiſdom, which men place in being able to over-reach and defraud each other, conſiſting in the *Skill and cunning Craftineſs of them that lye in wait to deceive*: But this is a Wiſdom falſely ſo called; and the End of it appears always to be the extremeſt Folly. There *is* a Wiſdom of thoſe, who by *Political Skill* manage ſecretly the great Affairs of the World,

World, and by deep Counſels bring about unexpected Changes in the States and Kingdoms of the Earth: but *This* Wiſdom is often a great Snare, and a dangerous Temptation to Men's Virtue; giving extraordinary Opportunities indeed to the brighter Virtue of ſome very few Heroick Spirits to ſhine forth illuſtriouſly, to the Glory of Religion in ſingular Acts of Moderation and Juſtice, of Piety and great Goodneſs, for the Publick Peace and Security of Mankind; but much more uſually joined with great Wickedneſs, and ſeldom mentioned in Scripture, but with the Marks of an evil or ſuſpicious Character. There *is* a Wiſdom, in *Words*, and artful *Repreſentations* of Things; called by St. *Paul the enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom:* But *This* alſo in Scripture, is always ſpoken of with an ill Character; being that *Philoſophy and vain Deceit*, That art of confounding Truth and Falſhood, which St. *Paul* warns us againſt; and which vain Pretence to Wiſdom, God choſe the weak things of the World, the plain unaffected ſimplicity of the Doctrine of the Goſpel, on purpoſe to confound. Laſtly, There *is* a Wiſdom in ſearching out the Secrets of *Nature*, and underſtanding the Variety of the Works of God: And this indeed, ſo far as 'tis practical, and leads to the Knowledge of the Author of Nature, is an excellent Wiſdom, and worthy of great Commendation: But where 'tis *merely Speculative*, 'tis of more difficulty than Uſe, and lies level to the Capacity of but few men's Underſtandings. The *only Wiſdom*, that *all* Men are capable of, and that *all* Men are indiſpenſably obliged to attain, is the *Practical Wiſdom* of being truly Religious; the Wiſdom of underſtanding, and of ſteddily purſuing their own true Temporal and Eternal Intereſt. The compariſon between *Speculative* and this *Practical Wiſdom* is moſt elegantly made by *Job*, in his xxviiith chapter: *Surely*, ſays he, *there is a Vein for the Silver, and a place for Gold where they fine it*, ver. 1. *There is a Path which no Fowl knoweth, and which the Vulture's Eye has not ſeen; The Lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce Lion paſſed by it*; ver. 7. *But where ſhall* Wiſdom *be found, and where is the Place of Underſtanding?* ver. 12. *Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the Land of the living; the depth ſaith, It is not in Me; and the Sea ſaith, it is not with Me; It cannot be gotten for Gold, neither ſhall Silver be weighed for the price thereof*, ver. 15. *Whence then cometh Wiſdom? and where is the place of Underſtanding?* ver. 20. The Reply Follows; God, ſaith he, *underſtandeth the Way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof; For* He *looketh to the Ends of the Earth, and ſeeth under the whole Heaven*, ver. 23. But *unto* Man *he ſaid; Behold, the Fear of the Lord, That is* his *Wiſdom, and to depart from Evil, that is* his *Underſtanding*, ver. 28. His Meaning is; The Secrets of *Nature*, God only knoweth perfectly; but the Knowledge of *Religion* is the proper Wiſdom of *Men. The ſecret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed, belong unto Us and to our Children for ever; that we may do all the Works of the Law*, Deut. xxix. ult. This is very affectionately expreſſed likewiſe by *Moſes* in his exhortation to the *Iſraelites*, Deut. iv. 6; *Behold, I have taught you ſtatutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me; — Keep therefore and do them; for This is* your Wiſdom *and* Underſtanding *in the ſight of the Nations.* This is that which alone can make men truly great, truly admirable and praiſe-worthy; *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſdom; a good Underſtanding have all they that do thereafter; the Praiſe of it endureth for ever*, Pſ. cxi. 10. I conclude this Head, that *the Practice of Religion is* in general *Man's trueſt Wiſdom*, with the excellent Words of the wiſe Author of the Book of *Eccluſ.* ch. i. 14, 16, 26, 27. *To fear the Lord, is the beginning of Wiſdom; and it was created with the faithful in the Womb: To fear the Lord, is fulneſs of Wiſdom; and filleth men with her fruits: If thou deſire Wiſdom, keep the commandments; and the Lord ſhall give her unto thee; For the Fear of the Lord, is Wiſdom and Inſtruction; and Faith and Meekneſs are his Delight.*

2*dly*, The Practice of Religion, as it is Man's trueſt Wiſdom *in general*, ſo *in particular* the Text aſſures us 'tis wiſe in *this Reſpect*, that it tends to prolong our Life and lengthen our Days: *The Fear of the Lord, is the beginning of Wiſdom; and the Knowledge of the Holy, is Underſtanding; For by Me thy* days *ſhall be multiplied, and the* years *of thy Life ſhall be increaſed.* There is nothing in the *Old* Teſtament more frequent, than promiſes of Health and Life, of a longer and more comfortable Subſiſtence to them that live in Obedience to the Commands of God. In the delivery of the Law, God himſelf annexes to the Fifth Commandment a Promiſe, that *the Days* of thoſe that obſerved it ſhould *be long in the Land which the Lord their God*

SERM. XXIV.

God had given them: And St. *Paul* takes notice of it as the *firſt*, and indeed the *only* Commandment, *with* an expreſs and particular *Promiſe* annexed. *Solomon*, in his Book of *Proverbs*, among a great variety of Arguments to perſwade men to the Practice of Virtue, always mentions *Length of Days*, as a principal Motive propoſed by God in the perſon of Wiſdom; *My Son, forget not my Law, but let thine Heart keep my Commandments; For length of Days, and long Life, and Peace ſhall they add unto thee*, Prov. iii. 1. *They ſhall be Life unto thy Soul*, ver. 22; and ver. 13. *Happy is the Man that findeth Wiſdom, and the Man that getteth Underſtanding*; For *Length of Days are in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour*, ver. 16. And accordingly the Pſalmiſt in his exhortation to Obedience, cited by St. *Peter* in his firſt Epiſtle; *Come ye children*, ſays he, *hearken unto me, I will teach you the Fear of the Lord; What man is he that deſireth Life, and loveth* many *Days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy Tongue from evil, and thy Lips that they ſpeak no guile; Depart from evil, and do good*, Pſ. xxxiv. 11. And in the prophetical deſcription of the final happy reſtoration of *Jeruſalem*, among other bleſſings it is added, *Iſ.* lxv. 20. *There ſhall not be* in it *an old man that hath not filled his days.* On the contrary, among the various Threatnings denounced in the *Old* Teſtament againſt Sinners, 'tis very uſual to make this declaration, that their *Days ſhall be ſhortned.* Prov. x. 27. *The Fear of the Lord prolongeth Days; but the Years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortned.* And *Job* xv. 31. *Let not him that is deceived, truſt in Vanity; for Vanity ſhall be his recompenſe. It ſhall be accompliſhed before his Time, and his Branch ſhall not be green. He ſhall ſhake off his unripe Grape as the Vine, and ſhall caſt off his Flower as the Olive.* The Application of which Obſervation, is made by the Wiſeman, *Eccleſ.* vii. 17. *Be not overmuch Wicked, neither be thou fooliſh; why ſhouldeſt thou die before thy Time?* There is *ſomething* in the *Nature of Things* that tends to verify this Doctrine; and there is *More* in the *poſitive Appointment and Conſtitution of Providence.* In the *Nature of Things*, men deſtroy themſelves and ſhorten their Days by many kinds of Wickedneſs: By Wars and Deſolations they depopulate whole Countries; by private Quarrels they bring each other to untimely Ends; by capital Crimes they bring themſelves to be cut off by the Hands of Juſtice; by Luxury and Intemperance they deſtroy their Bodies; the riotous and unclean perſon going (as *Solomon* very elegantly expreſſes it) like *as an ox goeth to the ſlaughter, or as a Fool to the correction of the ſtocks; 'Till a dart ſtrike through his Liver; as a Bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life*, Prov. vii. 22. By Envy and Malice they conſume themſelves, and pine away in the midſt of their Iniquity; This alſo is elegantly expreſſed by *Solomon*, Prov. xiv. 30. *A ſound Heart is the Life of the Fleſh, but Envy the Rottenneſs of the Bones.* Laſtly, by the Terrors of their own Minds are they eaten up, and gnawed upon by the Worm of Conſcience till they are conſumed. *Pſ.* xxxix. 11. *When thou with Rebukes doſt chaſten Man for Sin, thou makeſt his Beauty to conſume away, like as it were a Moth fretting a Garment.* In like manner on the other hand, according to the ſame natural Tendency of Things, by Peace and Charity are men preſerved from Deſtruction; by Temperance are their Bodies maintained in Health; by Quiet of Conſcience and Satisfaction of Mind, is a new Life added to their Spirits; *Prov.* iii. 7. *Fear the Lord and depart from Evil; It ſhall be Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy Bones*, which Notion is ſtill more fully expreſt by the Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus*, ch. i. ver. 11, 12, 20. *The Fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladneſs, and a crown of rejoycing; The Fear of the Lord maketh a merry Heart, and giveth joy and gladneſs, and a long Life; The Root of Wiſdom is to fear the Lord, and the Branches thereof are long Life.*

And This, in the *Natural Order and Tendency of Things.*

In the *poſitive Appointment and Conſtitution of Providence*, there was yet *more* Aſſurance of the Doctrine; God, under the Old Teſtament, wherein theſe Promiſes were made, *uſually* preſerving the Righteous by a ſingular Care and Protection; (ſo that *Job*'s Friends could appeal to experience, *Whoever periſhed being innocent? or when were the righteous cut off?* Job iv. 7.) and on the contrary, the ſame Providence *generally* cutting off the Wicked by extraordinary judgments, in the preſent Life. Even of thoſe who proſpered *longeſt*, ſo that it was *hard* for the Pſalmiſt to *underſtand* the reaſon of it, and reconcile it with Providence, *Pſ.* lxxiii. 16; yet even of *Theſe* at length he obſerved upon better conſideration, *Surely thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places, thou caſtedſt them down into Deſtruction; How are they brought into*

into Deſolation as in a moment! they are utterly conſumed with Terrors, ver. 18, 19. But, moſt frequently, evil Doers were cut off *ſooner*, and deſtroyed ſuddenly in the midſt of their career. *Haſt thou marked the old way, which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down* out of Time, *whoſe Foundation was overflown with a Flood?* Job xxii. 15. *Bloody and deceitful Men, ſhall not live out half their days*, Pſ. lv. 23. Upon account of the Profaneneſs of *Eli*'s Family, God threatens him, 1 *Sam.* ii. 32. *There ſhall not be an old man in thy houſe for ever.* And the Pſalmiſt, as being ſenſible what the uſual Effect of Wickedneſs was, prays thus, *Pſ.* cii. 24. *O my God, take me not away in the midſt of my Days.* Indeed, in the whole Book of *Pſalms* the Wicked are perpetually threatned with being cut *off* before their Time: And That Threatning is paraphraſed with great Variety and Elegancy of Expreſſion, in the Book of *Job*; *The Flag, whilſt it is yet in its greenneſs, and not cut down, it withereth before any other Herb*; *So are the Paths of all that forget God, and the Hypocrites Hope ſhall periſh*, ch. viii. ver. 12. *Yea, the Light of the Wicked ſhall be put out*; *and the ſpark of his Fire ſhall not ſhine*, ch. xviii. ver. 5. *His roots ſhall be dried up beneath, and above ſhall his branch be cut off*, ver. 16. *They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low,——and cut off as the tops of the ears of Corn.* ch. xxiv. ver. 24. SERM. XXIV.

Nevertheleſs, after all This; foraſmuch as general Threatnings are not executed always without exception; neither were the Wicked conſtantly cut off, even under the Times of the *Old* Teſtament, but ſometimes proſpered for a long time; and Sudden Cutting off was not itſelf always a judgment, but ſometimes a *taking away from the Evils to come*; and righteous Perſons themſelves, were not always preſerved from every Deſtruction, but in ſome caſes, God threatned to *cut off the Righteous with the Wicked*; and Preſervation itſelf, or Length of Days, was not always a Mercy; but only when it was promiſed and granted as an Emblem or Præſignification of a longer, even of an eternal Life; and the Temporal promiſes of the Old Teſtament, cannot Now be applied with any Certainty under the New, where eternal Life is ſo much more clearly revealed: For theſe reaſons, in the

3*d* place, It may be worthy our Inquiry, *how far* this Bleſſing of long Life, promiſed to Obedience under the Old Teſtament, is proper to be deſired by Chriſtians under the Goſpel State. And here it is certain, the Goſpel gives us ſo mean a Notion of the preſent Life, and ſo glorious a repreſentation of the Happineſs of that to come; that no man who firmly believes the Scriptures, and has lived ſo religiouſly as to have ſecured to himſelf a good Foundation againſt the Time to come, but muſt needs wiſh rather, (whenever he ſeriouſly meditates upon theſe things,) to be *delivered from the miſeries of this ſinful World*, and *to be preſent with the Lord, which is far better.* But alas! there are few, extremely few, whoſe Lives have either been ſo innocent, or their Repentance and Amendment ſo complete, as not to have Reaſon to wiſh for *more years*, wherein to root out more perfectly their former ill Habits, or to improve the good Diſpoſitions they have already in ſome meaſure attained. And it were very well, if even Years and Experience could, in theſe latter degenerate Ages of the World, produce but the ſame Effect which the Belief of the Goſpel, in the primitive and pureſt Times, accompliſhed frequently as it were in a Moment. But if the generality of Chriſtians *were* ſo perfect, as not to need to deſire longer Space of Time for their *own* Amendment and Improvement; yet at leaſt for the ſake of *others*, with whom they are concerned either in private Friendſhips, or in natural Relation, or in publick Affairs, 'tis reaſonable men ſhould deſire for themſelves, and others for them, the Bleſſing of Length of Days. *For none of us liveth to Himſelf, and no man dieth to Himſelf*, Rom. xiv. 7; and St. *Paul*, though for his own part he deſired rather to *be preſent with the Lord*; yet, becauſe for him *to live* was *Chriſt*, that is, was needful for the propagation of the Goſpel, and more beneficial to the Perſons he had Converted; therefore he deſired rather to continue with them; and This he calls the *Fruit of his Labour.* Phil. i. 22. Further; ſince God has placed Us in this World, for Ends and Purpoſes of his all-wiſe Providence; and we know not beforehand what Duties he intends to call us to; and he has implanted in us a natural and neceſſary Deſire of Life, in order to accompliſh his Wiſe Deſigns in the Government of the World; 'tis therefore natural and reaſonable for us to look upon Length of Days as a Bleſſing; and that *the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteouſneſs.* But

SERM. XXIV

when any perſon through diſcontent deſires, not to continue in the World, nor to fulfil that Duty which God has appointed him here; 'tis like deſiring that he had never come into it; which is murmuring and finding Fault with God's Creation, and repining at God for making us ſuch Creatures as he has been pleaſed to make us. However, the very longeſt Life here, is but a Moment in Compariſon of Eternity; And the greateſt Length of Days is then only really a Bleſſing, (as I before obſerved,) when 'tis a Type or Emblem of a happy Eternity, of God's *giving men indeed a long Life, even for ever and ever*, Pſ. xxi. 4. We ought therefore to make it the main Care of our Lives to ſecure our Eternal Happineſs hereafter; and then Length of Days here will be a Bleſſing, not only upon their own Account, but much more ſo upon account of their affording us Opportunity of preparing ourſelves by ſtill greater Care and Watchfulneſs, and continual improvement of ourſelves in the Practice of all Virtues, for a more perfect and complete Degree of Happineſs in the Life to come. If This be not done, Length of Days will, like all other Bleſſings be turned into a Curſe; and become only a ſtronger Evidence againſt us of our incorrigible Impenitency. If we be not *ſo taught to number our days, as to apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom*; If as our Years paſs on, we think not more and more intenſely on the Preparations for Eternity; but defer our Repentance from *day* to *day*, and put off our deſigns of being religious from one *year* to another; it will nothing profit us, (nay, on the contrary, it will be a great Aggravation of our Miſery,) that *our Days have been multiplied, and that the Years of our Life have been increaſed*. For, when *all theſe things are paſſed away as a Shadow, and as a Poſt that haſteth by*; (which is the caſe even of the longeſt Life here upon Earth;) then ſudden and ſo much heavier deſtruction will come upon us unawares, even as Pain upon a Woman in Travail, and we ſhall not eſcape. Then the expectations of the delaying Sinner ſhall appear *thin as the Spider's web*; and his *Hopes as the light Chaff, which the wind ſcattereth away from the Face of the Earth*. Then they who ſpend the Day in Riot and Debauchery, and ſay *To-morrow ſhall be as this Day and much more abundant*, ſhall have their Soul required of them in a moment; and *the Servant that ſays in his Heart, my Lord delayeth his Coming; and ſhall begin to beat the men-ſervants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that ſervant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in ſunder, and will appoint him his portion with the Unbelievers*; and how *much* ſoever the Maſters delay, *i. e.* how *long* ſoever that wicked Servant's *Life* be, yet his deſtruction, when it comes, ſurprizes him unprovided as in a moment. But He, on the other hand, who in a ſhort Life makes ſpeedy proviſion for Eternity; though he be prevented with early death, yet, *being made perfect in a ſhort Time, he fulfilleth a long time*; as the Son of *Sirach* excellently expreſſes it; *For honourable Age is not that which ſtandeth in length of Time, nor that is meaſured by numbers of Years*; *But* Wiſdom *is the gray hair unto men, and an unſpotted life is old Age.*

SERMON

SERMON XXV.

Of imitating the HOLINESS of GOD.

1 PET. i. 15, 16.

But as he which hath called you, is Holy; so be ye Holy, in all manner of Converſation; Becauſe it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

SERM. XXV.

NOTWITHSTANDING the natural Proneneſs of Mankind to Superſtition; and the ſtrong Bent which is in all corrupt Minds to endeavour to make amends, by formal and external Services, for the want of true Virtue and Holineſs of Life; yet even in the *Heathen* World itſelf, under the bare Light of *Nature* alone, the beſt and wiſeſt men were ſenſible of this great Truth, that the moſt acceptable Service which could be paid to God, was to endeavour to become *like* him by a righteous Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind. The *Revelation* which God has been pleaſed to make to us of himſelf in Scripture, does every where confirm this Notion; and almoſt the whole Deſign, both of the antient Prophets under the Law, and of all our Saviour's Diſcourſes in the Goſpel, is to eſtabliſh the ſame Doctrine: *As he which hath called you, is Holy; ſo be ye Holy, in all manner of Converſation.* In the following Diſcourſe upon which words,

SERM. XXV.

words, I ſhall 1*ſt* briefly ſet forth the *Obligations* we are under to *imitate* the God whom we worſhip. 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider the true *Extent*, and proper *Limitations* of This Duty. And 3*dly*, I ſhall draw ſome uſeful *Obſervations* from the whole.

I*ſt*. I ſhall briefly ſet forth the *Obligations* we are under, to *imitate* the God whom we worſhip. The *Difference* of *moral Good and Evil*, is, in the nature of things, eternally, eſſentially, and unchangeably neceſſary. Juſt as *Light* and *Darkneſs* are of neceſſity always contrary to each other, and can by no Power be made to be the ſame. With regard to this neceſſary and unalterable difference of Good and Evil; the *Will of God*, who can never be impoſed upon by any Errour, is conſtantly and invariably determined to do always what in the whole is *beſt and fitteſt* to be done, according to the everlaſting Rules of Juſtice, Equity, Goodneſs and Truth. This, is the Ground and Foundation of all God's *own Actions* in the Government of the Univerſe. Now the ſame intrinſick Excellency of *Right* and *Good*, which always determines the Will of *God Himſelf*, *ought* alſo in Proportion to govern the Actions of all *other* rational Beings likewiſe, according to the degree of their *Knowledge* of what is right, and of their *Power* to perform it. That is to ſay; All *rational and intelligent* Beings are, by the Law of their Nature, obliged to endeavour to become in their ſeveral degrees and proportions *like* unto *Him*, who alone is *Perfect* Reaſon and Underſtanding. This is an *original* Obligation, founded in *Nature it ſelf*, *requiring* us to *imitate* what it *neceſſitates* us to *admire*. And this Obligation is confirmed by the ſame Light of Reaſon, teaching us further, that *Imitation of God*, as 'tis moſt *fit* in *itſelf*, ſo it cannot but be likewiſe moſt acceptable unto *Him*, and agreeable to his *Will*. For, the *ſame abſolute Perfection* of the Divine Nature, which makes us certain that God muſt *Himſelf* be of Neceſſity infinitely Holy, Juſt and Good; makes it equally certain that he cannot poſſibly approve Iniquity in *Others*: And the ſame *Beauty*, the ſame *Excellency*, the ſame *Weight and Importance* of the Rules of everlaſting Righteouſneſs, with regard to which God is always pleaſed to make thoſe Rules the Meaſure of all his *Own* Actions, neceſſarily prove, that it muſt likewiſe be his *Will*, that all rational Creatures ſhould proportionably make them the Meaſure of *Theirs*. Even among *Men*, there is no *Earthly* Father, but in thoſe things which he eſteems his *own* Excellencies, *deſires* and *expects* to be imitated by his *children*. How much *more* is it neceſſary that *God*, who has the tendereſt Concern for all his Creatures, and who is infinitely far from being ſubject to ſuch Paſſions and Variableneſs as frail *Men* are, ſhould deſire to be imitated by his Creatures in thoſe Perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable Happineſs?

Heb. i. 13. Particularly, if God is *himſelf* eſſentially of infinite Holineſs and Purity; it plainly follows, that 'tis impoſſible but he muſt likewiſe be of *purer Eyes than to behold* with Approbation any manner of *Impurity* or *Immorality* in his *Creatures*. And conſequently it muſt needs be his *Will*, that they ſhould All (according to the Meaſure of their frail and finite nature) be *Holy as he is Holy*.

If God is *himſelf* a Being of infinite Juſtice, Righteouſneſs and Truth; it muſt needs be his *Will*, that all *rational Creatures*, whom he has created after his own Image, whom he has endued with excellent Powers and Faculties to enable them to diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil; ſhould imitate him in the Exerciſe of thoſe divine Perfections, by conforming all their Actions to the eternal and unalterable Law of Righteouſneſs.

If God is *himſelf* a Being of infinite Goodneſs; *making his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and on the Good, and ſending Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt*; having *never left himſelf wholly without Witneſs, but always doing Good, giving men Rain from Heaven and Fruitful Seaſons, and filling their Hearts* with Food and gladneſs: it cannot but be his *Will*, that all *reaſonable creatures* ſhould, by mutual Love and Benevolence, permit and aſſiſt each other to injoy in particular the ſeveral Effects and Bleſſings of the divine univerſal Goodneſs.

If God is *himſelf* a Being of infinite Mercy and *Compaſſion*; as 'tis plain he bears long with men before he puniſhes them for their Wickedneſs, and often freely forgives them his *ten thouſand Talents*; it muſt needs be his *Will*, that they ſhould forgive one another their *hundred pence*; being *merciful* one to another, *as he is merciful*

ciful to them All; and *having Compaſſion* each *on his Fellow-ſervants*, as God *has pity on Them*. SERM. XXV.

Again: If *Love* towards God be an obvious and principal Duty of Natural Religion, in thoſe who believe God to be the Supreme Good; it follows of neceſſity, that *Imitation* of him alſo muſt equally be a Duty of indiſpenſable Obligation. For God, being eſſential Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs and Truth, can no otherwiſe have *Love* expreſt towards him from his Creatures, than by their loving and imitating thoſe Virtues in *their* Practice, which in *His* Nature are eſſential Perfections. Love of God, in any *other* ſenſe than This, is nothing elſe but unintelligible Enthuſiaſm. Laſtly; If *Happineſs* is Man's chief End; and *perfect Happineſs* is, in the divine nature, in *eſſential* conjunction with perfect *Holineſs and Goodneſs*; it follows neceſſarily, that *ſo far only* can any creature poſſibly become *like* to God in the injoyment of *Happineſs*, as he is firſt made *like* to him in the participation of *Goodneſs*.

Theſe are the *Obligations* we are under, to *imitate* the God whom we worſhip; drawn from the conſideration of the Nature *of things*; and of the *Will of God as made known to us by the Light of* Reaſon *only*. In the *Revelation* which God has been pleaſed to make to us of himſelf in *Scripture*, the neceſſity of the ſame Duty is more expreſly and more clearly inforced. At the delivery of the *Law*, *to Moſes*, the *particulars* of Duty, by which the Worſhippers of the True God were to be diſtinguiſhed from all other Nations, are introduced with this *general* Preface to the *whole*, Levit. xix. 1. *The Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, Speak unto all the Congregation of the children of Iſrael, and ſay unto them, Ye ſhall be Holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy*. And ch. xi. 44. *I am the Lord your God; ye ſhall therefore ſanctify yourſelves; and ye ſhall be holy, for I am Holy*. By the *citation* of which words, ſpoken thus from the Mouth of *God himſelf* to *Moſes*, *the Apoſtle* confirms his *own* Argument in the words of the Text; *As He which hath called you, is Holy; ſo be Ye Holy, in all manner of Converſation*: Becauſe *it is written, By ye Holy, for I am Holy*. Man, was originally created in the *Image* of God, *Gen.* i. 27; that is, he was made in his *natural* capacity a rational and intelligent creature, capable of diſtinguiſhing between Good and Evil, and of being Lord over the inferiour Creation. By a right uſe of theſe Powers and Faculties, in imitation of God, he is declared likewiſe in the *moral* ſenſe, to be *after God, created in righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*, Eph. iv. 24. *After God*; that is, after the *pattern and ſimilitude* of God, *after the* Image *of Him that created him*, Col. iii. 10. By Debauchery and Corruption of manners, by the Practice of Any wickedneſs whatſoever, men are *alienated*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *from the* Life *of God*, Eph. iv. 18: And when again by true Repentance and real Amendment of Life, they return to their Duty, and improve in the Practice of Virtue; the Apoſtle repreſents them as being reſtored and *made partakers of the* Divine Nature. 2 *Pet.* i. 4. The manner of ſpeaking is figurative, and very elegantly expreſſive of that *moral* likeneſs to God, which is elſewhere ſtiled literally, being *partakers of his* Holineſs, *Heb.* xii. 10; and, in the Text, being *Holy* as *He is Holy*: Without which *Holineſs*, the Scripture plainly declares, *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*. A *Likeneſs* to God *here*, by the habitual Diſpoſition of a virtuous mind, is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the enjoyment of *Glory* and *Happineſs hereafter*. And the Perfection even of *That* Glory and Happineſs itſelf principally conſiſts in our becoming ſtill *more and more* like him, by the total aboliſhing of all Sin: *We ſhall be* like *him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is*, 1 Joh. iii. 2. What the *full* meaning of This is, the Apoſtle tells us, *does not yet* clearly *appear*. But, though *God* is *himſelf* inviſible; yet both by the *Light of Nature* we have a *competent* Knowledge of his *moral* Attributes; and in the Life of *Chriſt*, who is the *viſible* Image of the inviſible God, we have a complete Example, and Pattern of moral *Perfection*, ſet before us to imitate. *Learn of Me*, ſaith our Saviour, *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*, Matt. xi. 29. And again in another place, *I have given you an Example*, ſaith he, *that ye ſhould do as I have done to you*. The Apoſtles accordingly, in their exhortations to the practice of Virtue, do frequently remind us of this Divine Pattern: 1 *Pet.* ii. 21. Chriſt has *left us an* Example, *that ye ſhould follow his Steps; who did no Sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*: And 1 *Joh.* ii. 6. *He that ſaith, he abideth in Him, ought himſelf alſo to walk, even as he walked*. This is the higheſt Excellency and Perfection of a Chriſtian; to be *con-*

Heb. xii. 14.

Joh. xiii. 15.

SERM. XXV.

formed to the Image of the Son of God, by a Life of Virtue and Righteouſneſs *here*: Which whoſoever is, ſhall *hereafter* alſo be *changed into the ſame Image, from glory to glory*; when our Lord ſhall *preſent* his Servants *faultleſs before the preſence of his* Father's *glory, with exceeding Joy*; and they *ſhall ſee his Face, and his Name ſhall be in their foreheads*; and they *ſhall ſerve him day and night in his Temple*, and enjoy his uninterrupted Favour for ever and ever.

Rom. viii. 29. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Theſe are the *Obligations* we are under to imitate God: Which was the *firſt* Head I propoſed to ſpeak to.

II*dly*, I am in the next place to conſider the true *Extent*, and proper *Limitations* of this Duty. And here 'tis very evident,

1*ſt*, That All imitation of God muſt be underſtood to be an imitation of his *moral* Attributes only, and not of his *natural* ones. In the exerciſe of his Supreme *Power*, we cannot imitate him: In the Extent of his unerring *Knowledge* we cannot attain to any Similitude with him: We cannot at all *Thunder with a Voice like Him*, Job. xl. 9; nor are we able to ſearch out and comprehend the leaſt part of the depth of his unfathomable *Wiſdom*. But his *Holineſs and Goodneſs*, his *Juſtice*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Truth*, his *Mercy* and *Compaſſion*; theſe things we *can* underſtand; in theſe things we *can* imitate him; nay, we cannot approve ourſelves to him as obedient children, if we do not imitate him therein.

The Holineſs of God; that is, *in* general, That diſpoſition of the Divine Nature, by which he is infinitely removed from all *moral Evil Whatſoever*, is in an emphatical manner propoſed to our imitation in the words of the Text; *As he which has called you is Holy, ſo be* Ye *Holy in all manner of Converſation*. The word, *Holineſs*, is perpetually in the mouths of Chriſtians; but what it properly *means*, This they have often but a very imperfect and confuſed Notion of. It ſignifies originally, in the Jewiſh language, *Separation from Common Uſe*: And in *That* Senſe, all the Veſſels and Furniture of the Temple are, in the Old Teſtament, ſtiled, *Holy*. In the ſame Senſe 'tis uſed of *Perſons* alſo imployed in the Service of God, who are intitled to this *external* and *nominal Holineſs*, whether they really anſwer their character or no. But the word is uſed in a *better* Senſe, when 'tis transferred from this *literal* to a *moral* ſignification; expreſſing a man's being *ſeparated*, by true religion, from the *common Practices* of a vicious and corrupt World; And, when applied to *God*, it ſignifies his *infinite* Diſtance, from every *kind* and *degree* of *moral Evil* whatſoever.

In the Text therefore is propoſed to our imitation the Example of the Divine *Holineſs*, or his *Hatred to Sin and Wickedneſs* in general; *Be ye Holy, for I am Holy*. In *other* paſſages of Scripture, particular moral Attributes are laid before us as Patterns to walk by. The words immediately following the Text ſet forth the Juſtice of God; ver. 17. *Calling on the Father, who, without reſpect of Perſons, judgeth according to every man's work*. In the *fifth* chapter of St. *Matthew*, our Saviour directs us to imitate the Goodneſs of God, as the moſt effectual means to obtain a ſhare in his Favour, and a part in his moſt perfect Happineſs: *Love your Enemies*, ſaith he, (that is, *not*, make them equal with your Friends, *but*, deſire and promote their amendment, and then be ready to forgive them;) *do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you*: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven*, (that is, that ye may be *like* unto *Him*,) who *maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt*. And, to mention no more Inſtances, the *Mercy* of God is by our Saviour in a very affectionate manner propoſed as an Example to excite us to Charity; *Luk.* vi. 35. *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your Reward ſhall be great, and ye ſhall be the children of the Higheſt; for He is kind unto the Unthankful and to the Evil; Be* ye *therefore merciful, as your Father alſo is merciful*. Which laſt words, are remarkably varied by St. *Matthew*, in his narration of the *ſame* Diſcourſe of our Lord. For what in St. *Luke* we read thus, *Be ye therefore*, merciful, *as your Father alſo is merciful*, is by St. *Matthew* ſet down in the following manner; *Be ye therefore* perfect, *even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*. As if *Perfection*, and *Mercy or Charity*, were one and the ſame thing; and as if he that was truly indued with this virtue of *Charity*, might *conſequently* be ſuppoſed to be perfect in all *other* virtues likewiſe. This is the *firſt* neceſſary limitation, of this Duty of imi-

Mat. v. 48.

tating

tating God; it muſt always be underſtood to be an imitation of his *moral* Perfections only. SERM. XXV.

2*dly*, Even in theſe *moral* Excellencies, 'tis evident further, that it muſt neceſſarily mean an imitation of *likeneſs* only, and not of *Equality*. One would think, there could be no great *need* of this Obſervation. Yet ſome Enthuſiaſts there have been, who have vainly boaſted themſelves to be altogether without Sin; and being puffed up with ſpiritual pride, and thinking themſelves *above* the Duties of what they call *common Morality*, have by a Neglect of true Virtue, *fallen into the ſnare* and *condemnation of the Devil*. Of This kind there ſeem to have been Some in St. *John*'s time, againſt whom he directs his Diſcourſe, in his Firſt Epiſtle, ch. i. 8. *If we ſay that we have* no Sin, *we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us*. But in our *preſent* Age, men are apt to run much rather into the *contrary* extreme; not *pretending* to a perfection *above* what is human, but *neglecting* to endeavour after what *is* their *Duty* to obtain. They know God to be a Being of infinite Holineſs; that he *charges even his* Angels *with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his Sight*: And therefore they think *frail men* may be excuſed from attempting to imitate him at all. But This is a very wicked and profane Suggeſtion. For though the Goodneſs indeed of ſuch imperfect creatures as *we* are, can be but in a very mean and low degree; yet *in* that proportion and degree; we are indiſpenſably bound to follow after it. And as a Finite *can* reſemble Infinite, ſo *we are* to reſemble God, by partaking of the ſame moral excellencies in *kind*, though they cannot but be infinitely inferiour in *degree*. The Light of a *Star*, though it bears no proportion at all to the glorious Beauty of the *Sun*, yet *Light* it is nevertheleſs, and directly contrary to *Darkneſs*: So the Virtues of *Angels and of Men*, though they bear *no proportion* to the adorable Perfections of *God*, yet, in their proper *meaſure and degree*, they reſemble them, as being of the ſame *nature and kind*; oppoſite and contrary to *wickedneſs*, juſt as every degree of *Light* is contrary to *Darkneſs*. The Apoſtle aptly expreſſes This, by the ſimilitude of a *Child* learning to imitate the Virtues of a *wiſe* man, and an *affectionate* Parent; *Eph.* v. i. *Be ye therefore* Followers *of God*, ſaith he, *as Dear* Children.

3*dly*, But though our Imitation of the moral Perfections of God is always to be underſtood with theſe great Limitations; as ſignifying an imitation of *Likeneſs* only, and not of *Equality*; ſuitable to the weak nature of ſuch frail, imperfect, and fallible Creatures: Yet ought we *alſo* to conſider, that even in the *Degrees* of Goodneſs it is our Duty *continually* to improve, if we will at all anſwer the Precept in the Text, *Be ye Holy, for I am Holy*. A perfect and moſt complete Example is ſet before us to imitate, that aiming always at That which is moſt excellent, we may grow continually and make a perpetual Progreſs in the ways of Virtue: And though we can never come up to our Pattern itſelf, yet, by ſuch imitation as our frail and mortal nature is capable of, we may attain to what St. *Peter* calls being *made Partakers of the Divine Nature*. Which participation of true Holineſs *after the Image of him that created us*, is truly and in a proper Senſe the *comparative* Perfection of our *Human* nature, as *abſolute* Perfection is the Perfection of the *Divine*. Which clearly explains the meaning and extent of St. *Paul*'s exhortation, 2 *Cor.* vii. 1. that we ſhould perfect *Holineſs in the Fear of God*; and That Advice of our Saviour himſelf, St. *Matt.* v. 48. *Be ye* perfect, *even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*.

III. It remains now in the *laſt* place, that I draw ſome uſeful *Obſervations* from the Whole of what has been ſaid; and ſo conclude. And

1*ſt*, If true Religion conſiſts in the imitation of God; and all imitation of God, is of neceſſity confined to his *moral* Perfections only; then it hence evidently follows, that *moral Virtue* is the chief End of Religion; and that, to place the main ſtreſs of religion in any thing elſe beſides true Virtue, is Enthuſiaſm or Superſtition. When our Saviour gave his Apoſtles Power over unclean Spirits, he thought it neceſſary to add at the ſame time the following Caution, *Luke* x. 20. *Notwithſtanding in This rejoice not, that the Spirits are ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice, becauſe your Names are written in Heaven*: your *Names are written in Heaven*, that is, your Repentance and Obedience is acceptable to God: For ſo, in Scripture-phraſe, they who *keep the Commandments of God*, are ſaid to be *written in the Book of Life*; and thoſe who *Sin* againſt him, he threatens that he will *blot* out of his *Book*, Exod. xxxii. 33. Again: In his deſcription of the day of Judgment, *Many*,

SERM. XXV.

ny, ſays our Saviour, *will ſay to me in That day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you, Depart from Me ye that work iniquity*; That is, all ye who have lived vitiouſly and immorally. St. *Paul* in like manner, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1. *Though I ſpeak*, ſays he, *with the Tongues of Men and Angels; and though I have the gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, —— it profiteth me nothing.* The greateſt part of the *Rulers* of this World are ſtrangely guilty of *This* Errour; when they affect rather to be like God in *Power*, which is *not* an imitable Attribute, than in *Goodneſs*, wherein alone 'tis their Glory to be like him.

2*dly*, If true Religion conſiſts in the imitation of God; and that which is imitable in God, be his *moral* Perfections; hence it follows neceſſarily, that *moral* Excellencies, *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs*, *Truth*, and the like, are of the *ſame kind* in *God* as in *Men*. For otherwiſe, if (as ſome have imagined in order to maintain unintelligible doctrines) *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs*, *and Truth* in *God*, did not anſwer our common and natural Notions of thoſe Virtues; but were of a kind quite different, and inconceivable to us; how then could Men be obliged to *imitate* they knew not what? or how could it become poſſible in *any* ſenſe to be *holy as he is Holy*, if it could not be underſtood by us, *What* Holineſs is? The Truth therefore plainly is; As Light is Light, *whereſoever* and in what *degree* ſoever it appears, and has no communion or ſimilitude with Darkneſs: ſo Goodneſs, in *whomſoever* and in what *degree* ſoever it be found, ſtill always carries along with it the ſame Idea of Goodneſs, and has no communion or Fellowſhip with Wickedneſs.

3*dly* and *Laſtly*; From hence it appears, of how great importance it is to *Men* to frame to themſelves right and worthy Notions of *God*. For ſuch as are the Conceptions Men have of the *Object of their Worſhip*; ſuch alſo will proportionably be *their* own *Behaviour and Practice*. The *Gentiles*, who worſhipped *vile and impure Deities*, were *themſelves* accordingly *given up to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*. The *Jews*, when they fell from the Worſhip of the True God, to ſerve the Idols and Images of really or fictitiouſly *cruel Dæmons*; were *themſelves* accordingly deveſted of humanity, and ſacrificed even their own Children to *Moloch*. And among *Chriſtians* likewiſe, it is too ſad and true an obſervation; that in proportion as they have departed from the Simplicity of the Goſpel, and feigned to themſelves either *ridiculous* or *wicked* notions of the infinitely wiſe and good God; ſo has their *religion* accordingly been changed either into a *ridiculous*, or into a *barbarous* and *cruel* Superſtition. The only poſſible remedy for which Evil, is to adhere ſtedfaſtly and immoveably to the natural and unchangeable notions of *righteouſneſs and holineſs* in *God*, and the indiſpenſable neceſſity of true *righteouſneſs and holineſs* among *Men*.

SERMON

SERMON XXVI.

Of the LOVE of GOD towards Sinners.

St. JOHN iii. 16.

For God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.

THESE Words are *part* of that Excellent Diſcourſe, wherein our Saviour inſtructed *Nicodemus*, giving him a ſhort Account of the Doctrine of the Goſpel; And the Words themſelves are a brief Summary of that whole Diſcourſe. *Nicodemus* was a Man of Learning and Authority among the *Jews*, and, as it ſeems, of a better and more pious Diſpoſition, than the generality of thoſe of his own Rank. Moved therefore by the Greatneſs of our Saviour's Miracles, and probably alſo having ſtudied the Prophecies, which foretold the coming of the Meſſias about That Seaſon; he thought himſelf bound to inquire what That Doctrine was, which our Saviour began ſo publickly and with ſo great Authority to teach; And accordingly he goes to him by Night, to converſe privately about it. Our Saviour, addreſſing himſelf to him as to a Man of Under-

SERM. XXVI.

SERM. XXVI.

ſtanding, begins at the Foundation of the Whole; and repreſents to him the Neceſſity of entring upon a religious Courſe of Life, according to the perfecter and more ſpiritual Principles of the Chriſtian inſtitution: ver. 3. *Except*, ſays he, *a man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God.* Which Expreſſion, *Nicodemus* at firſt not underſtanding; our Saviour further explains it to him, ver. 5. *Except*, ſays he, *a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit*; Except he be baptized into the Profeſſion of the true Religion, and, ſuitably to this external Obligation, be inwardly renewed and purified from all wicked Diſpoſitions in the Spirit of his Mind; *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* For, *whatſoever is born of the Fleſh*, can be but *Fleſh*; *That which is born of the Spirit*, That only *is Spirit.* By *natural* Birth, a Man can have no other Title than only to the injoyments of this *Natural and Mortal Life*: To *Immortality* and a ſhare in the *Kingdom of God*, he cannot be intitled, but by a New and *Spiritual* Birth, by being delivered from the Dominion of Fleſhly Luſts, and living under the more perfect Law of Reaſon and Religion. To make This ſtill more intelligible, and to take off the Difficulty of apprehending the meaning of that Phraſe of being *Born again*, our Saviour proceeds to illuſtrate it by an eaſy ſimilitude, ver. 7; that, as in the Courſe of *Nature* ſome of the greateſt and moſt ſenſible Effects are produced by ſecret and imperceptible Cauſes; ſo it ought not to be wondered at, if ſome of the greateſt *Moral* Effects, and moſt important Changes in the Mind of Man be wrought likewiſe by degrees inviſible, and by means not diſcernable to Senſe: *Marvel not that I ſaid unto thee, ye muſt be born again: The* Wind *bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the Sound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*; ſo *is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Having thus prepared the Way, by explaining the Foundation; our Saviour from hence makes a Tranſition, ver. 12. to the higher and more ſublime Doctrines of the Goſpel; *If I have told you*, ſays he, *earthly things, and ye believe not; how ſhall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* If ye believe me not even in theſe plain and more obvious matters, which I have ſuited to your Capacities, and delivered in eaſy Compariſons, drawn from the moſt natural and common things here upon Earth; how much leſs will ye believe me, when I tell you more ſublime and heavenly myſteries? when I declare to you the Dignity of my Perſon and Office, the ſpiritual Nature of my Kingdom, and the Sufferings I muſt firſt undergo for the Redemption of Mankind? And yet theſe things are true and certain as the others; and the Works which I do, are ſufficient Arguments, why ye ſhould believe me even in Theſe things alſo. Now theſe ſublimer Doctrines he begins to enumerate, ver. 13. *No man*, ſays he, *hath aſcended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven:* That is; Chriſt, the *Son of Man*, the promiſed Meſſias, *That Son of Man* deſcribed in the Prophet *Daniel* as *coming in the clouds of Heaven* to receive an everlaſting Dominion; *This* Son of Man came forth from God, ſo as no other Prophet, no not *Moſes* himſelf, ever did; For he was with God before he came amongſt Men; and when he firſt appeared in this World, he had before had a Being in Heaven in the Boſom of his Father, in which Dignity he ſtill continues. And 'tis the Prerogative of *him* only, who came thus from God as no other ever did, throughly to underſtand and to reveal to Men, the yet ſecret Counſels of God concerning the eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom, and the Method of Men's Salvation. *No man hath aſcended up to heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* What this Method of Men's Salvation was he proceeds more diſtinctly to declare, ver. 14 and 15, *As Moſes lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderneſs, even ſo muſt the Son of Man be lifted up; That whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have eternal Life.* That is: That the Meſſiah, by his Sufferings and Death ſhould accompliſh the Redemption and Salvation of Men, opening an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, to all thoſe who ſhall ſincerely obey him; *This* (ſays our Saviour) ye ought not to be ſurprized at, as a new and ſtrange Doctrine; ſince ye

have

have a repreſentation and prediction of it, even in your own Law. For as *Moſes* ſet up in the Wilderneſs the Figure of a Serpent, which being indeed the Likeneſs of a venomous Beaſt, yet was ſo far from having any thing of its poiſonous Nature, that on the contrary all thoſe which had been bitten by real Serpents, were immediately healed by looking up towards this Repreſentation: So the *Son of Man*, the *Angel of the Covenant*, being made in the likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, yet having really no Sin in him, ſhall be lifted up on the Croſs, that by the Power of his Death, ſinful men believing in him, and being enabled to conquer and forſake their Sins, may obtain remiſſion of Sin, and Everlaſting Life. *For* thus he adds in the Words of the Text, ſumming up his whole Diſcourſe; *God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* SERM. XXVI. Mal. iii. 1. Iſ. lxiii. 9.

The Connexion of our Lord's Diſcourſe being thus explained; we may in the Words themſelves conſider 1*ſt*, how and in what ſenſe it is ſuppoſed, that without the coming of Chriſt into the World, Men could not but have periſhed: 2*dly*, in what Senſe it is affirmed, that all who believe in him ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting Life: and 3*dly*, we may take Notice, that this Salvation of Men by the Coming of Chriſt is aſcribed to the antecedent Love of God, the original Goodneſs and Mercy of the Father Almighty. God *ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

1*ſt*, We are to conſider, how it is *ſuppoſed* in the words of the Text, that without the Coming of Chriſt into the World, Men could not but have periſhed. And for the clearer explaining the ground of this Suppoſition, it may be proper to obſerve in the *firſt* place, that when God originally created Man in the State of *Innocence*, and ſeated him in the Garden of Paradiſe, there was no *Obligation* upon *God* to indue him with Immortality. 'Twas not by Virtue of any Claim of *Right*, or by any *Neceſſity* in the Nature of the Thing, but an Effect of his unbounded *Goodneſs* only, and a mere *free Gift*, that *God created Man to be Immortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity.* He might juſtly have created him for what Time he pleaſed; and even in the State of *Innocence*, might without any Wrong have put a Period to That Being, which at firſt 'twas nothing but his own good Pleaſure, that moved him to give Beginning to at all. And if this was the Caſe even in the State of *Innocence* itſelf, how much more when Man by Sin had forfeited all Title to the Divine Favour! If God was under no obligation to give Immortality to the immediate Work of his own Hands, how much leſs to the Poſterity of a fallen Sinner! and what claim could *They* have to the perpetual injoyment of Paradiſe, which to their Firſt Parent himſelf, even in his moſt perfect State of Innocence, was but a Free Gift! Undoubtedly nothing is more evident, than that God might without any Wrong have left them All to the natural Conſequences of their own Mortality, and without any Injury to them might have forborn to make that Promiſe of eternal Life in Chriſt, which the World would have had no Right to demand, even though there had never been in it any Sin. But then we are alſo to obſerve *further*, that all the Sons of *Adam* are moreover Sinners *themſelves*; and as by the Sin of *Adam* they became in the *Courſe of Nature* excluded out of Paradiſe, and from the Tree of Life, and from the Hopes of Immortality; ſo by their *own* Sins they became farther, and in a more proper Senſe, liable to the Wrath of God; and ſubject, not only to *Death*, which came *equally* and *univerſally* upon All; but alſo to *actual Puniſhments* in the future State, *proportionable* to every man's *private* Sin and *perſonal* Demerit. From which *common Death*, coming *equally* upon *All*; and from which *proportionable Puniſhment*, due to *every* man's *particular* Sins: nothing, that Sinners themſelves could do, could avail to reſcue them, or to prevent their *periſhing* according to the Courſe of Nature, and the righteous Judgment of God. For God, whoſe Promiſe of Immortality even to *Innocent* Creatures, was but a Free Gift of mere Bounty, was much leſs under any Obligation to provide a Place

of

SERM. XXVI.

of eternal Happineſs for the Poſterity of a ſinful Parent; themſelves alſo actual Sinners, and at the beſt but very imperfect and undeſerving Penitents; whoſe greateſt Endeavours of Repentance, could at the moſt but afford ground of Hope for an Abatement of Puniſhment, and not any expectation of Reward. The Suppoſition therefore in the Text is by no means diſagreeable to Reaſon; that, without the Coming of Chriſt into the World, Men could not but have *periſhed*: Thoſe who *themſelves* had ſinned after the ſimilitude of *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion, being neceſſarily liable to the wrath of God, and to the proportionable *actual Puniſhment* of their Sins; and thoſe who had not ſinned in their own Perſons, being yet unavoidably in the Courſe of Nature involved in that *common Death*, from which *God* was not under any Obligation to reſcue them; ſeeing it was his *Free* Gift to give them Being at all, and that even in the State of *Innocence* itſelf He had been under no Obligation to indue them with Immortality.

This ſeems, ſtrictly and accurately ſpeaking, to have been the True State of *All Mankind*, when conſidered as antecedent to the Promiſe of Chriſt's Coming. But it deſerves alſo to be taken Notice of, that as in moſt other places, ſo in the Text likewiſe, 'tis probable that when men's *Periſhing* is ſpoken of, it is not ſo much to be underſtood in that *ſtrict Senſe*, wherein *Every man whatſoever* is liable, more or leſs, to the Wrath of God; as in that more *general and uſual Senſe*, wherein both *Jews* and *Gentiles* are repreſented as being for the *greateſt part* by an univerſal Corruption of Manners loſt in Sin, and utterly fallen *ſhort of the Glory of God*. The *Jews* had in their Law itſelf, no Expiation appointed for great and wilful Tranſgreſſions; And therefore *through* Chriſt was *preacht unto* them *the forgiveneſs of Sins*; that *by him, all that believe* might be *juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes*, Acts xiii. 39. And Rom. viii. 3. *What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Fleſh, God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and for Sin, condemned Sin in the Fleſh.* The *Gentiles* are juſtly repreſented by St. *Paul*, as being *Enemies* to God; *walking* generally *in the Vanity of their Mind*; *Having the Underſtanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their Heart*; *who being paſt feeling*, (having loſt all ſenſe of the natural and eſſential Difference of Good and Evil,) *have given themſelves over* —— *to work all Uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, Eph. iv. 18. This was too plainly the caſe of the greateſt part of the *Gentile*-World in the Apoſtles Time. And though there be among *Us*, ſome Deniers of the Goſpel of Chriſt, who pretend that by the Light of Reaſon, without any Belief of Revelation, they can make out the Obligations of Morality, and teach men the Practice of Virtue, and their natural Duty both towards God and Man; yet the beſt and principal of thoſe Reaſonings they are inabled to make uſe of even concerning *natural* Religion itſelf, are evidently owing to that Light and Improvement, which has ariſen from the Preaching of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*. Had the Knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion never been propagated amongſt Us, we had ſtill, like our barbarous Anceſtors, been Worſhipping of Stocks and Stones in the Darkneſs of moſt ſtupid Ignorance: And thoſe very Perſons, who now endeavour to turn againſt Chriſtianity, thoſe Arguments for the Reaſonableneſs of Natural Religion, which without the Knowledge of the Goſpel they would never have been able to diſcover; far from improving themſelves, as they fondly imagine, under the Light of Nature, had then in all probability been deſtitute of the common Principles even of Civility and Humanity. 'Tis to the Mercy of the Goſpel therefore, that theſe Perſons owe their being *Now* in a State ſo different from that of the *Gentiles* in the Apoſtles Times, who, by their total Corruption, were in a State of abſolute *Enmity againſt God*, and liable to his ſevereſt Wrath. Without the Knowledge of Chriſt, it cannot be doubted but the greateſt part of *Us*, who now are apt to think ſo highly of our own Improvements, would have been in the Caſe of thoſe, who *not liking to retain God in their Knowledge*, were *given up unto vile Affections*, and *received in themſelves That recompence of their Error, which was meet, being drowned in Deſtruction and Perdition.*

dition. And those who, by escaping the greater Pollutions, would not indeed have been involved in the same *degree of Perdition* with the rest, (for the Judge of all the Earth will always do what is Right,) yet would have had *no Title* to that eternal Inheritance, that heavenly Kingdom, which is the *Free Gift* of God in Christ; an undeserved Gift, which nothing that Men could do of themselves, even when they had done their whole Duty, could at all have merited, or (without the Sanctification of the Spirit of God,) have qualified them for. For *Except a man be born* from above (so the words are in the original, which we render, *Except a man be born again*;) *Except a man be born* from above, *except he be born of Water and of the* Spirit, *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, Joh. iii. 3, 5. *Neither is there Salvation in any other*, Acts iv. 12. *For there is none other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*; i. e. whereby we can attain *that* Kingdom of Heaven, *that* free Gift of eternal Life, *that* Place peculiarly *prepared* by Christ for his Disciples out of the *Many Mansions in his Father's House*, *that* Weight of Glory and unspeakable Reward, undeserved even by our best Performances. Very *agreeable* to *Reason* therefore is the Supposition in the Text, that, without the coming of Christ into the World, men, in the manner before explained, could not but have *perished*.

2*dly*, The Second thing to be considered in the Text, is; in what Sense 'tis affirmed, that *All who* believe *in* Christ, *shall not perish, but have everlasting Life*. Of which Kind, there are frequent *general* Assertions in Scripture. *Acts* x. 43. *Through his Name, whosoever* believeth *in him, shall receive Remission of Sins*; and ch. xiii. 39. *By him, all that* believe, *are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses*. St. *John* in like manner in his First Epistle, ch. v. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life; These things have I written unto you that* believe *on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal Life*. And our Saviour himself, in the Gospel, St. *John* iii. 36. *He that* believeth *on the Son, hath everlasting Life*; and in the words immediately before those of the Text, ver. 14. *As Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; That whosoever* believeth *in him, should not perish, but have eternal Life*. There have been some so absurd, as from these and other the like passages in the New Testament, to conclude that by *Faith* only, *viz.* by a bare Assent to the Truth of the Christian Doctrine, or by a confident Perswasion of their belonging to Christ, they should not fail of Obtaining Salvation. But the contrary is plain both from the Reason of the thing itself, and from numberless other passages of Scripture: That, when it is affirmed, that whosoever *believeth* in Christ, *shall not perish, but have everlasting Life*; the meaning is not, whosoever *professeth* or *pretends* to believe in him, but whosoever *really* believes in him, and *with Effect*; whosoever is *so* perswaded of the Truth of his Doctrine, as to embrace the *Terms* proposed by the Gospel, and to make them the Rule of his Life and Actions. For as, in all other cases, things are judged of not by their *mere Denomination* and *external Appearances*, but by their *inward Powers or Qualities*, and by their *real Effects*; and *Shadows* are not taken for *Substances*, nor *Pictures* for the *Things themselves* which they represent, notwithstanding their being called perhaps by the same *Names*: So, *believing in Christ*, is not barely professing *to believe in him*, but *believing in him* indeed; believing his Doctrine to be *True*; considering it accordingly as of the utmost *Importance*; endeavouring consequently to understand it *ourselves*, and not trusting ourselves to be imposed upon by *Others*; and finally, *governing ourselves by it* in all our Actions, in the whole Course of our Lives. For the word *Faith*, always contains in it the Notion of *Faithfulness* or *Fidelity*. And though the plain Reason of the Thing itself might be sufficient in so evident a Case; yet the Scripture is not wanting to explain it also in variety of Words. *He that believeth*, (says our Saviour in another place,) *and is* baptized, *i. e.* and enters into an obligation to *live suitably* to That Belief; *he* shall be saved. For, *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the*

SERM. XXVI.

Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth *the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And *being baptized,* ſaith St. *Peter,* is not *the waſhing away of the filth of the Fleſh, but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God.* And *the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God,* is the *Faith* which *worketh,* or evidences itſelf, *by Love* : For *the End of the Commandment,* ſaith St. *Paul, is Charity, out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conſcience, and of Faith unfeigned,* 1 Tim. i. 5.

ALL that *believe* therefore, are *All* that *embrace* and *obey* the Goſpel. For Theſe, Chriſt came into the World on purpoſe, that they *might not periſh, but have everlaſting Life:* And becauſe the Goſpel was commanded to be preached to *every Creature,* that is, to all mankind; and God has expreſly declared that he would have *all men* to be ſaved; and deſireth not that *any* ſhould periſh, but that *All* might come to Repentance; therefore we may reaſonably underſtand the Words in the Text, *whoſoever believeth in him,* as if it had been Thus expreſſed: God gave his Son, that *Every one* by *believing in him*; that *every man,* by *his* means, and by accepting the advantage and gracious Terms of the Goſpel, might avoid periſhing, and obtain everlaſting Life. And This Senſe of the Phraſe is juſtified by the Words immediately following the Text, ver. 17. *For God ſent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the* World, that the *whole* World, *through him might be ſaved.* Thoſe to whom the Goſpel is actually preached, have this Salvation *clearly* offered them, unleſs they reject it by their wilful Impenitence. The Jews and Patriarchs had it no leſs *certainly,* though more obſcurely, repoſited in the expectation of him that was to come: And thoſe who never heard either of the Law or the Goſpel, yet have it *effectually* laid up for them, (though without their having any preſent Knowledge of it,) in that declaration of the Apoſtle, that *they which have not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves*; and that *their uncircumciſion,* if they *keep the Law,* ſhall (through the blood of Chriſt, though not explicitly made known amongſt them,) *be counted to them for circumciſion.* Thus God ſhall univerſally be juſtified, when he appears in Judgment; and *All mouths* ſhall be ſtopped before him.

And This may ſuffice for Explication of the 2*d* particular that was to be conſidered in the Text, *viz.* in what Senſe it is affirmed, that *all who* believe *in Chriſt, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

3*dly,* We are in the laſt place to take Notice, that This Salvation of Men by the Coming of Chriſt, is aſcribed to the antecedent Love of God, the original Mercy and Goodneſs of the Father Almighty. God *ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* It is a falſe Notion which ſome men have taken up of God, and very injurious to Religion, to conceive *God* in his own Nature to be a ſevere and mercileſs Puniſher; to look upon him as a Cruel Exerciſer of irreſiſtible Power, as an Object only of dread and horror; to imagine, that, contrary to his own Inclination, and as it were *againſt* his Will, he was prevailed upon by Chriſt to take Pity on his Creatures, as a Cruel and Paſſionate Man is ſometimes over-ruled by his Friend, to be better than his Intention. No: All This is a very unjuſt Repreſentation of God; The hard Speeches which ignorant or unrighteous men have ſpoken againſt him. The *Scripture* on the contrary, as well as *Natural Reaſon,* always ſets forth God as the Supreme Fountain of Goodneſs; the Preſerver, not the Enemy and Deſtroyer, of his Creatures. 'Twas not the interpoſition of Chriſt which *changed* the Mind of God; but 'twas the original Goodneſs and Love of God, which *appointed* for us the Interpoſition of Chriſt. To puniſh Sinners, and deſtroy Wickedneſs out of his Kingdom, is indeed the neceſſary Office even of that Governour who is Goodneſs itſelf; and therefore, in order to diſcourage Sin, he thought fit it ſhould be pardoned by no eaſier a Method, than by the Incarnation and Death of his Son. Yet 'twas his Goodneſs only that moved him to contrive that Method, and his original Love to his Creatures, that put him upon ſo reconciling Mercy with Juſtice. God did not *hate* the World, and ſuffer the Interceſſion of Chriſt to prevail over

that

that Hatred; but God *loved* the World, and *therefore gave* his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life. And hence it is, that the *Father* is ſtiled (by way of eminence) *God our Saviour*; Tit. iii. 4, 6. *The Kindneſs and Love of* God our Saviour, *which he ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour*. But this is a Subject of ſuch importance, that it deſerves to be treated of more particularly in a following Diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON XXVII.

Of the Love of GOD towards Sinners.

St. John iii. 16.

For God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

SERM. XXVII.

IN discoursing upon these Words, I have proposed to consider the following particulars; 1*st*, how and in what sense it is *presupposed* in the Text, that without the Coming of Christ into the World, men *could not but* have perished. 2*dly*, In what Sense it is affirmed, that *All* who *believe* in him shall not perish, but have everlasting *Life*. And 3*dly*, that this Salvation of Men by the Coming of Christ, is ascribed to the Antecedent Love of God, the Original Mercy and Goodness of the Father Almighty. *God* so *loved* the World, that he *gave his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life. The two Former of these Propositions I have already discoursed of and shall therefore at this Time proceed directly to the *Third*; namely, to observe, that in the Words of the Text, the Salvation of Men by the Coming of Christ, is expressly ascribed to the Antecedent Love of God, the original essential

tial Mercy and Goodneſs of the Father Almighty. *God* ſo *loved* the World, that *he gave* his only begotten Son. And This is neceſſarily to be obſerved, in Vindication of the eſſential *Goodneſs of God*, which is one of the primary Attributes of the Divine Nature; and in oppoſition to thoſe, who while they think they magnify the Redemption purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt, (which can never indeed be too much magnified in a *conſiſtent* manner,) ſeem to forget the equal Neceſſity, of maintaining at the ſame time all the original Attributes of God; and are not ſufficiently aware of the Danger of repreſenting *one* Method of God's acting, as inconſiſtent with *another*; or *any* of God's actions *ſo*, as to be *contradictory* to his *Nature* or any of his *Attributes*. For ſince Truth cannot be contrary to itſelf; and *every* true Doctrine muſt of Neceſſity be agreeable, and in perfect harmony on all ſides with every *other* true Doctrine whatſoever; 'tis of the utmoſt importance to Religion, that we take Care never to repreſent any *one* part of its Doctrine in ſuch a manner, as to deſtroy *another*; leſt *That* alſo in its turn deſtroy the *preſent* Notion; and ſo *Both* give Advantage to the Sceptical Unbeliever. 'Tis not eaſy to imagine, *how much* Religion has frequently ſuffered by this very means; and what occaſion has been given to the profane Adverſary to blaſpheme, whilſt the unwary carrying *particular* Doctrines too far, and preſſing them by Arguments not well conſiſtent with *other* Doctrines of equal Neceſſity, have afforded too plauſible Grounds of Objecting againſt the *Whole*. What I am now ſpeaking of will beſt be underſtood, by *inſtancing* in *particular Inſtances*. The *Juſtice* of God may ſeem to be moſt highly magnified, by ſuppoſing that it puts an abſolute *Neceſſity* upon him, either of inflicting an infinite Puniſhment, or of demanding an infinite Satisfaction. But they who ſo ſpeak, ought at the ſame time to conſider on the other hand, that they leave no room either for Goodneſs or Mercy: And that the Scripture on the contrary always ſpeaks, even of the Satisfaction of *Chriſt*, not as a Price or Equivalent which made our Pardon *due* by a Claim of *Right*; but as a Means *freely* appointed, and *freely* accepted, by the mere Mercy and Compaſſion of the Father; who, as Supreme Governour of all things, remits voluntarily of his own Right, in what Meaſure and upon what Terms he pleaſes. SERM. XXVII.

In like manner the *Grace* of God, ſome Men imagine they greatly magnify, when they aſcribe to its operation the *whole* and *entire* Progreſs of every good work. But if they would look at the ſame time on the other part of the Queſtion, they might find, that by leaving nothing at all for the *Will of Man* to do, they make him to be a Subject no more capable of Religion, than the Beaſts that periſh, or even than lifeleſs Matter itſelf.

Again; The Merit *of good Works*, which the Church of *Rome* boaſts of, is indeed effectually deſtroyed, by making good Works to be *of no importance at all* towards Juſtification, and by aſcribing the Whole to *Faith only*. But they who ſo deſtroy Merit, ſhould not be ignorant, that at the ſame time and with the ſame Argument, taking away the Neceſſity of Virtue and of good Manners, they deſtroy alſo the very Foundation of *all Religion*.

To give an inſtance or two of another kind. The *Authority of Councils*, or of *any human Power*, to determine Matters of Faith, is indeed a moſt effectual Means of putting a perpetual ſtop to all kinds of Schiſm, and to all Diviſions whatſoever in Matters of Religion: But he that uſes this Argument againſt an Adverſary *before* him, ought not to be unaware, that there is another *behind* him, who makes uſe of the very ſame Argument even with greater Force againſt *Him*; For the Church of *Rome* has plainly the greateſt and the moſt univerſal Weight of *human Authority*, which God ever permitted to oppreſs fair and impartial Inquiry after the Truth.

Again; the *Divinity of Chriſt* may ſeem to be moſt earneſtly and zealouſly contended for, by thoſe who confound it with the Supreme Independency and Self-exiſtence of the Perſon of the Father: But if they conſidered on the other hand, how in ſo doing they either deſtroyed the moſt fundamental Principle of *all* Religion, the *Unity* of God; or elſe the firſt Principle of *Chriſtian* Religion, the *Being* of the Son of God; it would appear that they knew rightly, neither the Father nor the Son.

SERM. XXVII.

Laſtly: To inſtance in the Doctrine of the Text the *Coming of Chriſt* into the World for the *Redemption of Mankind*; It may ſeem indeed at firſt ſight to be a pious extolling the Love of our Saviour, and the Greatneſs of the Work he undertook; to aggravate the natural Miſery of Mankind, to repreſent in the terribleſt Colours the Severity of the Juſtice of an incenſed God, and to deſcribe the Supreme Father and Creator of all things, as having no Thoughts of Pity or Compaſſion towards his periſhing Creatures, till moved thereto as it were *againſt* his original Intention, by the Interpoſition of Chriſt. But they who thus argue, ought on the other hand to be aware, that 'tis no leſs injurious to Religion, to diminiſh the original Goodneſs and Compaſſion of the *Father of Mercies*, than 'tis pious to be worthily ſenſible of the greatneſs of the Redemption purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt. A true and ſincere Chriſtian will after a conſiſtent manner magnify the Love of *Chriſt* in *dying* for our Sins; and the Mercy of *God*, in *ſending* him to die for that Purpoſe, in chooſing and in accepting that Atonement. God *ſo loved the World, that* he gave *his only-begotten Son*; (and the *only-begotten Son* ſo loved the World, that he was *willing to be given* for our Redemption;) that *whoſoever believeth on him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* The Salvation of Men therefore, is owing *both* to the *Redemption* of *Chriſt*, who gave himſelf for us; and to the antecedent *Love* and original eſſential Goodneſs of *the Father Almighty*, who was pleaſed to appoint and to accept that Sacrifice. Nor is it ſo great an Argument of the *Severity* of God, that he would not pardon Sinners without the Death of his Son; as it is of his eſſential *Goodneſs* and *Compaſſion*, that he would rather appoint his Son to die, than that Sinful man ſhould not be pardoned. He that appoints the *Means*, thereby declares his Choice and Approbation of the *End*: And if God had not been by Nature, originally and eſſentially Good and Merciful, he would no more have *accepted* any Propitiation *for* Sin, than he would have pardoned it *without* any. Moſt unjuſtly therefore, and with great injury to Religion, is God ſometimes repreſented as an implacable and cruel Judge, delighting in the deſtruction of Sinners, till they were *taken* (as it were) out of his Hands by the Interpoſition of Chriſt; This (I ſay,) is a very injurious Repreſentation of the Great God and Father of Mercies: For, the Coming of Chriſt was not the firſt Cauſe of the Goodneſs and Love of God towards us; but the eſſential and eternal Goodneſs of God was the cauſe and reaſon of the Coming of Chriſt. *God ſo* loved *the World*, ſays our Saviour, *that he* gave *his only-begotten Son.* It became the Supreme Governour of the Univerſe, to puniſh Sin: And yet he ſo loved the World, and had ſuch Compaſſion upon the Work of his Hands, that he was willing to find an Expedient by which ſinful Man might be pardoned and ſaved, without giving encouragement to Sin; and therefore *he* gave *his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

The words of the Text, are Each of them very emphatically ſignificant, and ſtrongly expreſſive of that glorious Attribute of the Divine Nature, his eſſential and eternal Goodneſs. *God* even the Father and Lord of all things, who diſpoſes all things according to the pleaſure of his own Will, and whoſe Actions can be determined by Nothing Without Himſelf; *He* ſo *loved* the *World*, was ſo moved by the original and eternal Goodneſs of his own Nature, to have Compaſſion upon the Work of his Hands; that he *gave*, freely and out of mere Bounty, without any Obligation, and without any Conſtraint; he gave *his* Son out of his Boſom, his *only-begotten Son*, the *Son of his Love*, to die for the Sins of Men; that ſo, though it was not fit, in his Wiſdom and Government of the World, that *Sin* ſhould paſs unpuniſhed; yet by this means, *Sinners* believing on him, and being by him brought to Repentance, might not periſh, but have everlaſting Life. He might juſtly have ſent his Son to take *Vengeance* upon a ſinful World; to *deſtroy* it *totally*, as he did before *in part* at the overthrow of *Sodom*; and to do it *finally*, as he had before done it *for a Time* at the general Deluge. But on the contrary our Saviour declares, that *Mercy* prevailed over Judgment; that *God ſo loved the World*, (that is, was ſo moved by his own internal Goodneſs to have compaſſion upon Sinners,) that he *ſent his Son into the World, not to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be ſaved*, Joh. iii. 17. In *later* Ages, many have

have been uſed to ſpeak otherwiſe; and to repreſent God as clothed with the mere Severity of a rigorous and ſtrict Judge, till his Wrath was, (as it were, *contrary to* his own Intention,) appeaſed and pacified by the Interceſſion of Chriſt. And This has made ſome very pious Perſons look upon God as an Object of the greateſt *Terror*, who on the contrary ought above all things to be *Loved* as the moſt perfect Good: For, comparatively ſpeaking, *There is none Good*, ſaith our Saviour, *but One, that is, God.* To *Sinners*, indeed, ſo long as they continue *Impenitent*, *God* cannot but be very juſtly an Object of the utmoſt Dread. And ſo alſo indeed is even *our Saviour himſelf*, who died for them: For thus the Scripture emphatically repreſents their Caſe, *Rev.* vi. 16. that they ſhall *ſay to the Mountains and to the Rocks, Fall on us; and hide us from the Face of him that ſitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the* Lamb. To *impenitent* Sinners, the Wrath of the *Lamb* himſelf is no leſs terrible, than even the Face of him that ſitteth upon the Throne. But on the contrary, to Sinners truly *penitent*, and to All who ſincerely endeavour to obey the Will of God; not only the Love of *Chriſt*, which is the *mediating* Cauſe, but the antecedent Love and eſſential Goodneſs of *the Father Almighty*, which is the *primary and original* Cauſe of their Salvation, is always in Scripture repreſented and laid before them as a *Motive of Gratitude*, and as a principal Argument to excite in *Them* ſuitable Returns of Love and Obedience to *Him.* In the twentieth chapter of the *Acts*, ver. 24. St. *Paul* calls his Apoſtleſhip *the Miniſtry which he had received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the Goſpel of the grace of God: The Goſpel of the Grace of God*, i. e. the gracious declaration of *God's* Love and Favour towards Mankind, manifeſted by *Chriſt.* In his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ch. i. ver. 1, 3, 5. he ſtiles it the *Goſpel of God, concerning his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, by whom we have received Grace; Grace*, that is, the gracious Manifeſtation of *God's* Compaſſion towards Sinners in the Goſpel. Ch. iii. 22, 25. he calls it the righteouſneſs *of God, which is by Faith of Jeſus Chriſt; whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his* righteouſneſs *for the remiſſion of Sins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God.* The Righteouſneſs *of God*, in ſending Chriſt for the remiſſion of our Sins, is a phraſe that ſounds harſh in modern language: But in the Jewiſh Speech, becauſe *righteous and good* men are *apt* to be moved with *compaſſion*, therefore they have but one and the ſame Word to expreſs both *Righteouſneſs* and *charitable Pity.* From whence, both in the Old and New Teſtament, the word *Righteouſneſs* muſt frequently be underſtood to ſignify, not ſtrict *Juſtice*, but *Equity*, *Charity*, *Forbearance*, and *Compaſſion*: And particularly in the Place now cited, the Righteouſneſs *of God* in ſending Chriſt, ſignifies, not any *Obligation* upon him in *Juſtice* ſo to do, but his *Goodneſs* and *Mercy* moving him to do it. In the ſame Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ch. v. 5, 6, 8, 15. he Thus deſcribes the ſtate of the Goſpel; that the Love of God *is ſhed abroad in our Hearts*, becauſe *when we were yet without ſtrength, in due time* Chriſt *died for the Ungodly*; And, that God *commendeth his* Love *towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners*, Chriſt *died for us*; And that, as *through the offence of One*, viz. by the Occaſion of *Adam's* Sin, *Many be dead*; ſo, and *much more, the* Grace *of God and the Gift by Grace*, i. e. the Love and Favour of God, *by one Man, Jeſus Chriſt, hath abounded unto Many.* And ch. viii. 32. He draws an Argument of *further* Hope, from *this very* conſideration; *He that* ſpared not *his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not*, with Him, *alſo freely give us all things*? 'Tis the ſame Argument, which the wife of *Manoah* had of old made uſe of, *Judg.* xiii. 23. *If the Lord were* pleaſed *to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering at our Hands.* Again, in the Second Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* ch. v. the Apoſtle repreſents God, not only as *conſenting* to our redemption by Chriſt, and being the *original Author* of it, ver. 18. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt*; but he carries it ſtill much further, ver. 20. *As though God did* beſeech *you by Us, we* pray *you* (ſaith he) *in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.* This is not the Character of a mercileſs and cruel Judge; to be himſelf not only the *Author* of man's Redemption by *Sending* his Son, but even to *beſeech* us alſo to accept him when he is ſent? *As I live*, ſaith the Lord God, *I have no pleaſure in the Death of him that dieth, but rather that he ſhould turn from his Ways and live.* Nor are theſe, *figurative* Expreſſions, or the incidental repreſentations

SERM. XXVII.

sentations of Single Texts; but they are the *whole Tenour* of Scripture, inculcating This Notion perpetually, as of the *greateſt importance* to Religion. Thus the ſame Apoſtle St. *Paul* again, in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, ch. ii. 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13. God, ſaith he, *who is rich in Mercy, for his great* Love *wherewith he* loved *us, even when we were dead in Sins, hath quickned us together with Chriſt*——*That in the Ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding Riches of his Grace, in his* Kindneſs *towards us* through *Chriſt Jeſus:* —— *For we are* His *workmanſhip, created* in *Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which* God *hath before ordained that we ſhould walk in them; Wherefore remember that ye being in time paſt Gentiles in the fleſh, who are called Uncircumciſion by that which is called the Circumciſion in the Fleſh made by hands, that at that time ye were without Chriſt, being aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and Strangers from the covenants of Promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world; But now in Chriſt Jeſus ye who ſometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt.* And in 2 *Theſ.* ii. 13, 14. *We are bound to give thanks always to* God *for you,* — *becauſe* God *hath from the beginning choſen you to Salvation,* ——*whereunto* he *called you by our Goſpel, to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt:* And ver. 16. *Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, and* God, even our Father, *which hath* loved *us and hath given us everlaſting conſolation, and good hope through grace* —— *ſtabliſh you in every good Word and Work.* Again, 2 *Tim.* i. 9. God ——*hath ſaved us, and called us* ——*according to his* own *Purpoſe and Grace, which was given us* in *Chriſt Jeſus before the World began:* And *Tit.* iii. 4, 6. *After that the* Kindneſs *and* Love *of* God our Saviour *toward Man appeared*;——*which* He *ſhed on us abundantly through* Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour: The expreſſion is *very* remarkable, that ſpeaking of the *Love of the Father* towards us, he calls *Him* by the Title of *Saviour* in the *firſt* place: *The Kindneſs and Love of* God *our Saviour, which* he *ſhed on us through* Jeſus Chriſt *our Saviour.* The Apoſtle St. *John* in like manner, 1 *Joh.* iii. 1, 16. *Behold* (ſaith he) *what manner of* Love, *the* Father *hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the Sons of God: Hereby perceive we the* Love *of* God, *becauſe* He (that is, *Chriſt*) *laid down his Life for us:* And ch iv. 9. very nearly repeating the Words of our Saviour in the Text, *In This* (ſaith he,) *was manifeſted the* Love *of* God *towards us, becauſe that* God ſent *his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him.* Theſe and numberleſs other the like paſſages in Scripture, do ſufficiently declare, what I at firſt propoſed to prove in Vindication of the Divine Attributes, *viz.* that the Salvation of men by the Coming of Chriſt, is and ought to be aſcribed primarily to the Antecedent Love, and Original eſſential Goodneſs of the Father Almighty. God *ſo loved the World, that he* gave *his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

It remains that I conclude, with drawing ſome uſeful Inferences from what has been ſaid upon This Subject.

And *1ſt*, From hence we may obſerve, that every Doctrine of Truth is conſiſtent both with *itſelf*, and with every *other* Truth; and ſtands clear of Objections, equally on *All* ſides. Upon *ſome repreſentations* of the *Severity* of *God*, and of the *Miſery* of *Men*, Unbelievers have been encouraged to object: If perfect Goodneſs be an eſſential Attribute of the Divine Nature, how then could God, who is infinitely Good, leave all men to periſh, antecedently to the conſideration of the Coming of Chriſt? The Anſwer is obvious: *God* did not cauſe Men to periſh, but their *own Wickedneſs* made it neceſſary for the Wiſdom of a perfectly Good Governour to puniſh and deſtroy them. And yet his Juſtice and Wiſdom were not more ſpeedy in condemning them, than his Goodneſs in moving him to find a means of bringing them to *Recovery* by Repentance, and to *Salvation* by Chriſt. And This Goodneſs did not firſt manifeſt itſelf at the Coming of Chriſt; but the Apoſtle aſſures us it was *given us in Chriſt Jeſus* before the World *began*, 2 Tim. i. 9. It was promiſed to *Adam*, it was repeated to the Patriarchs, it was declared by the Prophets; it was fulfilled in Chriſt: And both *before* and *ſince* the Coming of Chriſt, it has been made good to thoſe, who obſerved the *Law*, and who obeyed the *Goſpel*, and to thoſe who (without the Knowledge of Either) have been (as St. *Paul* deſcribes them) *a Law unto themſelves.* In this whole Tranſaction, the *Goodneſs* of God has manifeſted itſelf abundantly, in doing what he was by

by no means *bound* to do, what no Power could have *conſtrained* him to do, what to *Himſelf* was no *Benefit* or Advantage; (For he could as eaſily out of the *Stones* have raiſed up Children unto *Abraham*, according to the elegant Expreſſion of St. *John the Baptiſt*, as have prevailed with the real Children of *Abraham* to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance:) Laſtly, 'twas doing That, which brought the *greateſt Sufferings*, (not indeed *neceſſarily*, for that would not have been juſt; but *freely* and *voluntarily*,) *upon the Perſon who was moſt dear* to him, even his only-begotten and moſt beloved Son. And *What greater* Inſtance of Goodneſs and Bounty than This, can poſſibly be conceived? Had God, *without* requiring any Propitiation at all, freely forgiven all Sins upon Repentance; This (no doubt) would by all have been eſteemed an Act ſufficiently evidencing that perfect Goodneſs and Mercy which is an eſſential Attribute of the Divine Nature: But now, freely and of his own meer Bounty, to *find out and appoint* a Propitiation; is, with regard to his *Goodneſs* towards *Us*, the very ſame thing, as *requiring no Atonement at all* would have been; and, at the ſame, 'tis more *agreeable* to the Exerciſe of his *Other* Attributes, in the Government of the World. Neither therefore is the *eſſential Goodneſs* of God, in any wiſe inconſiſtent with that *Severity* againſt Sin, which made the Incarnation of Chriſt neceſſary to mens Salvation; Nor on the other ſide is that *Severity*, wherewith God condemns men antecedent to their redemption by Chriſt, at all inconſiſtent with the moſt perfect Notion of eſſential Goodneſs. SERM. XXVII.

2*dly*, From what has been ſaid, we may obſerve, of how great Importance it is to Religion, to frame right and worthy Notions concerning the *Attributes* and the *Actions* of God. The Foundation of Religion is the *Love* of God; and no Man can love whom he does not think well of. The Service of a Tyrant, is Slavery: And where there is not a Reverence, mixt with the Affection of *Love* as well as Fear, there the Obedience can be but Formal and External, without the Heart and without Life. 'Tis therefore of the greateſt Conſequence in Religion, that men entertain not hard and diſhonourable Thoughts of God. To repreſent God, as chuſing and delighting to make Men extremely miſerable, or as being originally and of Himſelf mercileſly ſevere, may indeed at firſt Sight to inconſiderate Perſons ſeem to magnify the Redemption purchaſed by Chriſt: But in reality, by deſtroying our natural Notion of God's eſſential Goodneſs, it deſtroys the firſt Principle and Foundation of Religion. God is, of Himſelf, the Father of Mercies: But becauſe, in the All-wiſe Government of the World, it was fit and neceſſary that Sin ſhould not go unpuniſhed, therefore this Mercy could not be manifeſted to us, but through the Son of his Love. Yet ſtill it was the ſame God, who moved by his *own* Compaſſion, ſhowed us mercy in his Son; And the Scripture is againſt no perſons more ſevere, than againſt thoſe who ſpeak hardly, and unworthily, of God. One part of the great and final Judgment, as repreſented by St. *Jude*, is to *convince men of all their* hard ſpeeches *which they have ſpoken againſt him*, ver. 15. And ſevere is the reproof given upon this Account to the ſlothful Servant in the Parable, St. *Luk.* xix. 22. *Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee*;——*Thou kneweſt that I was an auſtere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not ſow.* And 1 Sam. ii. 2. 3. *There is none Holy as the Lord*; —— *let not arrogancy* (in the original it is, *let not Hard words*) *come out of your Mouth.* And Mal. iii. 13. *Your Words have been ſtout againſt me, ſaith the Lord*; *Yet ye ſay, What have we ſpoken ſo much againſt thee? Ye have ſaid, It is vain to ſerve God, and what profit is it that we have——walked mournfully before* him? 'Tis therefore plainly injurious to religion, to entertain *hard* Thoughts of God, in diminution of his original and eſſential Goodneſs. Nevertheleſs on the contrary it ought alſo to be obſerved, that 'tis equally dangerous for Sinners to preſume on the *other ſide* unreaſonably upon his *Love and Mercy*. For as, *before* the Coming of Chriſt, men ſtood condemned for their *Sins*; ſo, *after* his Coming alſo ſhall they be condemned for their *impenitency*. And as the *Juſtice* of God did not prevent his *Mercy* from ſending a Redeemer to ſave all true *Penitents*; ſo his *Love in Chriſt* will not prevent his *Juſtice*, for becoming to all *incorrigible* Sinners a conſuming Fire.

SERM. XXVII.

3*dly*, From what has been ſaid, we may learn how vain That diſtinction is, which has ſometimes been made between *Nature* and *Grace*, as if the Gifts of *Nature* and thoſe of *Grace* were oppoſite to each other; when in reality they are nothing elſe but the Gifts of the *ſame* God, *derived* to us *originally* from the *eſſential* Goodneſs of his Nature, and *improved* in us by his *reconciled* Goodneſs and Mercy through Chriſt.

4*thly*, From hence we may obſerve, how the *Satisfaction of Chriſt* is by no means inconſiſtent with the notion of God's *Free Pardon* of Sin. For it was not, that the *Satisfaction of Chriſt* did in Strictneſs of Juſtice *oblige* him to pardon; but on the contrary, his Reſolution to pardon Sin determined him *freely to appoint and accept that Satisfaction.*

5*thly*, If *God* ſo loved *Us*, the Application is eaſy, that *We* ought alſo to love *Him*. And *how* we are to do *That*, the Apoſtle St. *John* tells us, 1 *Joh.* v. 3. *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments.* *Love* towards a Superiour conſiſts properly in taking pleaſure to do his Will: In delighting to obey him and to do things acceptable to him. *Whoſo* therefore keepeth *his* Word, *in Him verily is the Love of God perfected; hereby know we that we Are in Him*, 1 Joh. ii. 5.

Laſtly, If *God* ſo loved *us*, then ought *We* alſo, after *His* example, to love *one another*. And This is the Inference of the ſame Apoſtle St. *John*, 1 Joh. iv. 7—21; wherewith I ſhall conclude: *In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him;—Beloved, if God ſo loved Us, We ought alſo to love one another.——If a man ſay, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen? And This commandment have we from Him, that He who loveth God, love his Brother alſo.*

SERMON

SERMON XXVIII.

Of BELIEVING in GOD.

ROM. iv. 3.

Abraham believed *God, and it was counted unto him for Righteouſneſs.*

SERM. XXVIII.

BELIEF in *God* is the Foundation of all Religion both Natural and Revealed. For, *he that cometh to God muſt believe that He* Is, *and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Good Temper and Humanity *may be*, and often *is* the cauſe of many virtuous Actions; which, wherever they are found, ought never to go without their juſt commendation: But the *ſteddy courſe* of a virtuous and religious life, uniform in all its parts and upon all occaſions, reſiſting all the temptations of the World, overcoming all difficulties, and perſevering to the End under all diſcouragements; this is a Superſtructure which cannot be built upon a leſs ſtrong Foundation than a firm Belief of a future State, and an Expectation of the righteous Judgment of God.

Now,

SERM. XXVIII.

Now, as *without* Belief in God there *can* be *no Religion*; ſo, where there *is* ſuch Belief in God, the Scripture always in courſe ſuppoſes it accompanied with every *other* part of true Religion. The *Root* is *always* ſuppoſed to have the *Branches* joined with it; and where a *Tree* is mentioned, 'tis always underſtood to be a Tree bearing its proper *Fruit*. A *Man*, never ſignifies the dead *Body* of a Man without the *Soul* or *Life*; neither does *Faith* in Scripture-phraſe ever mean the bare *Profeſſion* of men's *Belief*, without *evidence* of its *reality* by its *Effects*; except only where it is declared to be *dead* and uſeleſs. *As the Body*, ſaith St. *James*, *without the Spirit*, *is dead*; *ſo Faith without Works*, *is dead alſo*, Jam. ii. 26. As, in *natural* things, to *ſeparate* Cauſes and Effects, to ſeparate things in their own nature inſeparable, to ſuppoſe the *Sun* to be without *Light*, or the *Fire* without Heat, is unnatural and abſurd: ſo, in matters of *Religion and Morality*, to ſeparate *Belief* and *Practice*, to ſeparate the *Obligation* to any Duty from the *Performance* of it, is, morally ſpeaking, monſtrous and impoſſible: the *one* being as contrary to *Reaſon*, which is the Rule of *Morality*, as the *other* is contrary to the courſe and poſſibilities of *nature*. For *this* reaſon both in Scripture and in common Speech, the Name of any *One* eminent Virtue is very uſually put for the *Sum* of *All*; and he that in the inſpired Writings is commended particularly for *One* Virtue, is not thereby ſo much intended to be diſtinguiſhed for *That*, as ſuppoſed to be thereupon endued with *all others* likewiſe. *Righteouſneſs*, which properly ſignifies the *particular* Duty of fair and equitable Dealing between Man and Man, is in Scripture generally uſed for the *whole* Practice of true Religion in general. And the Character given to *Noah*, Gen. vi. 9. that he *was a juſt man*; is in the very ſame verſe explained to be, that he was a man perfect *in his generation*, and that he *walked with God*. In like manner, *believing* in God; becauſe 'tis the Foundation of *Obedience* to him, and wherever it is ſincere will naturally be *attended with* ſuch Obedience, ſignifies therefore the ſame as living *religiouſly*. Which, as it is True concerning *Religion in* general, ſo in *Chriſtianity in* particular it is ſtill *more* uſual, to put *Faith* for the *whole* Practice of Virtue and Religion; becauſe, as the *Foundation* of *Religion in* general is Believing in *God*; ſo the Foundation of *Chriſtianity in* particular, is the Belief of that great *Act* of God, the raiſing his Son from the Dead, in order to judge the World in Righteouſneſs. Which is what the Apoſtle obſerves, ver. 23. of this chapter: *It was not written*, ſays he, *for Abraham's ſake alone*, *that his Faith was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs: But for* Us *alſo*, *to whom it ſhall be imputed*, *if we believe on Him that raiſed up Jeſus our Lord from the Dead*. This is the reaſon, why the *whole* Goſpel is, in the *New Teſtament*, ſo frequently called by the Name of *Faith*. The *Jewiſh* Religion is, on the contrary, through the whole *New Teſtament*, uſually ſtiled by the Name of *Works*; upon account of the numerous external Ceremonies and ritual Obſervations, which, though not in reality, yet, in the opinion and practice of the greater part of that Nation, were the main Body of their Religion, or that which they chiefly and moſt eagerly contended for. For ſo indeed, both in *antient* and in *modern* time, the corrupt diſpoſition of Mankind generally leads them to this one conſtant Error; to value *moſt* in every Religion that which is of *leaſt* importance in it; *opinions or ceremonies*, which diſtinguiſh them into different *Parties*; and not *true Virtue*, *Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs*, wherein all, who are indeed religious, do neceſſarily agree. The *great* Queſtion at the firſt preaching of the Goſpel, was, whether the Practice of Virtue required by Chriſt in *his* Religion, was ſufficient to Salvation, without the continuation of the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies. The Argument uſed by the Apoſtle to prove that it *was* ſufficient, was, that *Abraham* their Father was *himſelf* ſaved, not by the Obſervation of the *Rites They* laid ſuch ſtreſs upon; but by the Practice of the very *ſame* Virtues which the *Goſpel* now requires; inſomuch that the Scripture expreſly affirms, that the *Goſpel* was before Preached unto *Abraham*, *Gal.* iii. 8. And this Argument is at large urged in *Rom.* iv. 3. the preſent chapter, whereof my Text is a part. *Abraham's* Faith, ſays the Apoſtle, was *reckoned unto him for righteouſneſs*; and it was ſo reckoned unto him, not only *after*, but *before* his circumciſion, ver. 10. The acceptableneſs of his Faith therefore

fore did not depend upon the covenant of circumcision, as the *Jews* imagined; but upon that right and worthy *Notion of God* from which his Faith proceeded; and upon that *consequent Obedience*, of which his Faith was the cause; ver. 20. *He staggered not at the promise of God through Unbelief; but gave Glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteousness.* And the Application is, that *it was not written for* his *sake alone, but for* Us *also, to whom it shall likewise be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the Dead; who was delivered for our offences and rose again for our Justification.* Which last words are added to set forth the True Nature of Faith in Christ. For if the End of Christ's Death was to deliver us from *Sin*; and the End of his *Resurrection*, to bring us unto *Righteousness*; 'tis evident that Faith in Christ is no otherwise of Benefit to us, than as it tends to destroy *Sin*, and establish *Virtue*. Which shows the extreme Folly and most dangerous Error of Those, who set up Faith in opposition to Moral Virtue; and make the Gospel of Christ a Form of *Words* only, and an *imaginary Speculation*, instead of being (what the Scripture always represents it) the *way of Righteousness* and the *Holy Commandment*. SERM. XXVIII.

Having thus briefly explained the nature and ground of the Apostle's Argument *in general*; we may now easily understand the meaning of the words of the Text *in particular*: *Abraham* believed *God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*. *Abraham* was the great Example of Righteousness, so as to be stiled in Scripture (by way of eminence) *the* Friend *of God*, and the Father *of the Faithful*. Eccluſ. xliv. 19. *He was a great Father of many people; in glory was there none like unto him, who kept the law of the most High, and was in covenant with him.* Now *This* Righteousness, which the Son of *Sirach* calls keeping *the Law of the most High*, the Apostle calls the righteousness of *Faith*, in opposition to that of *Works*. By the *Works* therefore which he disparages, 'tis plain he means *Rites and Ceremonies*, not the *Practice of Virtue*; and by *Believing in God*, which he so highly commends, he means *True Religion*. By adhering to this true Religion, *Abraham* made proof of his believing in God, which was counted to him for righteousness; and *We*, if we *so* believe in God, shall have it imputed for righteousness unto *Us* likewise.

In order therefore to make this observation of the Apostle useful to us in Practice, it may be proper to consider distinctly, 1*st*, wherein consisted that *Faith* of *Abraham*, which the Text says was counted to him for righteousness; and 2*dly*, *What* it is, that is particularly required of *Us*, when *we* likewise are in Scripture commanded to *believe in God*.

I. Now the Account which the Scripture gives us of the *Faith* of *Abraham* is this:

1*st*, It consisted in his believing the *true* God, the Maker and Governour of the Universe, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. The Nations among whom he sojourned, were all Idolaters; Worshippers of dead men, worshippers of the Kings who had reigned over them in their life-time: For *That* was the original of all the Heathen-Idolatry. Every City or Territory had its own Prince, and the World was divided into small Kingdoms. These Kings were honoured by their Flatterers with Honours, during their *Lives* too nearly divine; and after their *Deaths*, they were by the ignorant people worshipped as Gods. The Worship paid to such Gods of their own making, was accordingly superstitious; and the corruption of their *manners* was answerable to the absurdity of their *religion*. From these *Abraham* separated himself, and believed in the true God the Maker of all things; and for the sake of that Belief forsook his native country. Heb. xi. 8. *By Faith Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, and sojourned in the land of Promise as in a strange country; for he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* He believed that the God of the whole World, whom alone he worshipped, was able to *preserve* him in the present Life, or *reward* him in another that should come; and This *Faith was counted unto him for righteousness*. Some have *disputed*, whether the Patriarchs under the old Testament had any express knowledge of the Life to come. But

SERM. XXVIII.

that they *had*, the Apoſtle's Argument is a plain *demonſtration*, Heb. xi. 13. They who having *ſeen the promiſes afar off, confeſſed themſelves to be Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth, declare plainly that they ſeek a* —— *better country*, ver. 16.

2*dly*, As *Abraham*'s Faith conſiſted *in general* in believing the *True God*, ſo *in particular* it manifeſted itſelf in ſuch *Acts* of Dependence upon him, as became a perſon who had *juſt and worthy Notions* of the True God whom he ſerved; And for This, it was counted unto Him for righteouſneſs. Thus St. *Paul* expreſly argues, in the caſe of *Abraham*'s receiving the promiſe of a Son, *Rom.* iv. 17. *Before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth thoſe things which be not, as though they were, He againſt Hope believed in Hope,* —— *giving glory to God, and being fully perſwaded, that what he had promiſed, he was able alſo to perform; and therefore* (ſaith he) *it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs.* Thus likewiſe in the caſe of offering up his *Son*, the excellency of his Faith conſiſted in This, that it was founded upon that Great Principle of Religion, the expectation of a Reſurrection from the dead. *He accounted*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *that God was able to raiſe him up even from the dead, from whence alſo he received him in a Figure*, Heb. xi. 19. Theſe laſt words, *from whence alſo he received him in a Figure*, are by Expoſitors underſtood to ſignify, *Iſaac*'s near eſcape from Death, when he was juſt upon the point of being offered. But This being an Event not foreſeen by *Abraham* before it came to paſs, could not be to him an Argument at That Time, to confirm his Faith. And therefore I think the words will bear *another* ſenſe, much more pertinent to the Apoſtle's intention. *Abraham*, ſaith he, *accounted, that God was able to raiſe him up even from the Dead*; and he had the more reaſon ſo to account, becauſe he had already once before *received him* from the dead *in a figure*; namely, at the time of his *Birth*, when he ſprang from Parents *as good as dead*; as the ſame Apoſtle expreſſes in the very ſame chapter. *Abraham*'s Reaſoning was This; (and it was very pertinent and ſtrong;) The ſame God who could cauſe *Iſaac* to receive life at firſt from *Parents already dead through Age*, could as eaſily the ſecond time raiſe him to life again, when he *himſelf* ſhould be *dead*.

3*dly*, The Faith of *Abraham* was not a Speculation or mere Credulity, but a Principle of Obedience and True Holineſs. Gen. xviii. 19. *I* know *Abraham, that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall* keep *the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has ſpoken of him.* Theſe words of *God Himſelf* in the Old Teſtament, are ſufficiently clear. But becauſe there aroſe afterwards ſome miſtakes about this matter; St. *James*, in expreſs deciſion of a point of controverſy in *His* time, alledges the very ſame example: Ch. ii. 21. *Was not Abraham our Father juſtified by Works, when he offered Iſaac his Son upon the Altar? Seeſt thou how Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works was his Faith made perfect! And the Scripture was fulfilled which ſaith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteouſneſs.* 'Tis very remarkable that theſe laſt words, which in the Text are cited by St. *Paul* for the magnifying the efficacy of *Faith*, are at the ſame time cited by St. *James*, to ſhow the *equal* neceſſity of *Works of Righteouſneſs. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteouſneſs. Abraham* was juſtified by *believing* in God; but the Reaſon why his Faith was ſo highly accepted, was becauſe the *Effect* of it was Righteouſneſs of Life.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*, The *Faith* of *Abraham* is oppoſed in Scripture, juſt as the Faith of Chriſtians is, not to the Works of *Virtue*, but to the *Rites and Ceremonies* of the Law of *Moſes*. *Gal.* iii. 7. *They that are of Faith*, ſaith St. *Paul*, that is, they who believing in Chriſt expect Salvation through the real Holineſs of the Goſpel, and not by ſuch outward Forms and Ceremonies as the *Jews* obſerved; *the ſame* (ſaith he) *are the children of Abraham*; ver. 6. *Even as* Abraham *believed God, and it was accounted to him for Righteouſneſs.* And *Rom.* iv. 13. *The Promiſe was not to Abraham or to his Seed through*

through the Law, but through the righteouſneſs of Faith: — To the end the Promiſe might be ſure to all *the Seed, not to that only which is of the Law, but to That alſo which is of the Faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all.* His meaning is: The Promiſes of God to *Abraham*, the Promiſe of giving him a better Country than that which he went out from; the Promiſe of being his God and his exceeding great Reward; the Promiſe of making him *Heir of the World*; (all which, the reaſon of the thing ſhows, and the Apoſtle in the eleventh to the *Hebrews* expreſly declares, to be meant of the heavenly *Canaan*, the new *Jeruſalem*, whereof the Land of Promiſe was but a Type and a Shadow;) Theſe Promiſes were made to *Abraham*, not as circumciſed, not as the Father of the Nation of the *Jews*; but as having *that* exemplary Faith, *that* firm Belief in the One true God the Maker of all things, *that* readineſs to obey him in oppoſition to the univerſal corruption of an idolatrous World, and *that* dependence upon God's being finally a Rewarder of them who diligently ſerve him without Any Proſpect of temporal Advantage; which made this great man to be deſervedly eſteemed the Father of all Faithful and Holy Men, who ſhould acceptably ſerve the ſame God, in all Ages and in all Nations of the World.

SERM. XXVIII.

Rom. iv. 13.

This is the Account the Scripture gives us of that *Faith of Abraham*, which *was accounted to him for Righteouſneſs*. The right Underſtanding of which matter removes at once all the Difficulties concerning the Notion of Faith and Works, which has occaſioned ſo many vain controverſies in the Chriſtian World, and at the ſame time may ſerve to inſtruct us, (which was the

II. *Second* thing I propoſed to ſpeak to;) *what* it is, that is particularly required of *Us*, when *We* likewiſe are in Scripture commanded to *believe in God*. And this evidently implies,

1*ſt*, Believing his *Being*: That is, not only, in a Speculative manner, believing that there *is* an infinitely Perfect Being, in the notional way wherein Philoſophers deſcribe him, which may eaſily be ſeparate from any religious Affection; but 'tis having upon our Minds a conſtant Senſe of his being, in the moral ſenſe, the Supreme Governour, and righteous Judge of the World. *This* Belief of the Being of God is That only, which becauſe it will certainly produce the Fruits of Virtue, ſhall therefore certainly be accounted unto us for Righteouſneſs.

2*dly*, The Duty of Believing in God implies, not only our believing his Being, and his being Governour and Judge of the World; but alſo that we have *worthy and honourable Apprehenſions* of his *Nature and Attributes*. For when any man thinks he believes in God, without attending at the ſame time to thoſe Perfections and Excellencies, which conſtitute the true and real Notion of God, he deceives himſelf with that empty fallacy of putting *Words* for *Things*; and inſtead of placing his Religion in obeying the Commands of the True Governour of the Univerſe, by the Practice of all Holineſs, Righteouſneſs, and Virtue; he will be apt to content himſelf with worſhipping he knows not *what*, and he knows not *how*, with a blind Superſtition, without underſtanding, and without any real improvement in Goodneſs. This is naturally the Effect of aſcribing *Abſurdities* to God, as thoſe of the Church of *Rome* do in the matter of *Tranſubſtantiation*; or of teaching things concerning him contrary to the common and obvious Notions of *Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs*, as thoſe have done, who contend for the Doctrine of abſolute and unconditionate *Predeſtination*. The Religion of ſuch men uſually conſiſts more in an uſeleſs amazement of Mind, than in any real Practice of Virtue: Than which, nothing can be more diſhonourable to God, or more injurious to Religion. For if a wiſe and good *man* had rather his Name ſhould not be mentioned at all, than that there ſhould be joined with it a Character contrary to Wiſdom and Goodneſs; much more muſt it needs be unacceptable to God, that men ſhould *frame* of him ſuch Notions as are not honourable to *Him*; and *ſerve* him with ſuch a Religion, as is of no True Benefit to *Them*. God governs the *natural* World with abſolute Power and Wiſdom; and the *moral* World with perfect Righteouſneſs, Juſtice, and Goodneſs. In the Imitation and Practice of theſe Virtues conſiſts the true Eſſence of Religion towards *men*; and in the acknowledgment of, and dependence upon, theſe Perfections of the Divine Nature, conſiſts True Faith towards *God*. Herein conſiſteth the Faith of *Abraham*; that,

SERM. XXVIII.

that, in the midst of an Idolatrous World, he constantly retained this Notion of the One invisible God of the whole Universe; and trusted in him, and served him, and obeyed him accordingly, in all Holiness and Righteousness of Life; depending upon a remote and invisible Reward; and therefore he was stiled, the *Friend* of God, and was set forth as a perpetual Example of True Faith to all succeeding generations. *Look at the generations of old*, saith the Son of *Sirach*, *and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or, did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise, that called upon him?*

3*dly*, Believing in God, signifies believing his *Revelations* also, as well as what *Nature* teaches concerning Him. The Obligations of *revealed* Religion are founded upon the same Ground as the obligations of *natural* Religion; and they mutually strengthen and confirm each other. By the dictates of *Nature* it was reasonable to expect that God would vouchsafe to make more clear to men his Will by *Revelation*; and in all true *Revelation* is contained a fuller enforcement and more strong confirmation of the Law of *Nature*. Men therefore who in Christian countries, where the Gospel is preached, pretend to believe in the *God of Nature*, and yet at the same time reject the revelation of the *Gospel*, which is so *agreeable to* and *perfective of* the Law of Nature; do, generally speaking, in *pretence* only, and not in *reality*, show any more regard to *natural* than to *revealed* Religion; falling for the most part into absolute Atheism. Whereas they who seriously believe, and practise the Duties of *natural* Religion, are generally disposed to embrace also consequently the *Revelation* of the *Gospel*. Those whom *the Father*, the God of *Nature*, draweth, come easily to *Christ*, who is the Author of the Gospel. The only thing necessary here to be observed, is, that for preventing with due care the *Frauds* and Impositions of men, who have sometimes attempted, (as particularly in many Instances in the Church of *Rome*;) to impose their own Inventions instead of Divine Revelation; diligent inquiry ought always to be made into the *evidence* of the *Facts*, and into the *nature and reason* of the *thing*. For a doctrine, even not unreasonable in itself, yet is not to be admitted as a Divine Revelation without good evidence of the *Fact*: Neither on the contrary can any pretence of evidence of Fact, be sufficient for the admission of a Doctrine *impossible or absurd in itself*. Transubstantiation has no evidence of being revealed: But had there been never so great an appearance of Evidence for it, yet it could not be received, because the manifest *Absurdity of the thing* would always be a stronger Argument *against* its being an Object of Faith, than any other Evidence could be *for* it. Every Revelation *must* be agreeable to the *Nature of God*, and to the *possibility of things*. Our Saviour himself alledges it as an Argument for the Proof of the Truth even of his *Miracles* themselves; that his Doctrine was directly contrary to the Power and Interest of evil Spirits, and tended in its own Nature to the Glory of God, and to the Benefit of Men: Otherwise the Objection of the Pharisees would have been of some force, that he cast out Devils by the Prince of the Devils. In the *Old Testament*, the greatest Difficulty of This kind is the Instance of *Abraham* offering up his Son; which if it was a thing unalterably evil in itself, it may be objected could never be a Revelation from God. For the clearing of which it is therefore to be observed, that of things Evil or Immoral there are three sorts. Some things are Evil, only because prohibited by a positive Law; and these it is evident are no longer evil, than the Law which forbids them continues in Being. Other things are Evil unalterably in their own Nature; even so as that it would be a direct contradiction and absolute impossibility to suppose, that God should at *any time* whatsoever, or upon *any occasion*, command them: Such are *Hatred of God and Goodness*, the *worship of False Gods*, a *malicious or cruel Temper of Mind*; and the like. Now between these two sorts of Evils there is a third; which is not only evil, because contrary to any positive Law, but contrary also even to the Law of Nature itself: Yet *not* so *unalterably*, but that in some particular circumstances, when expressly commanded by the God of Nature, it *may* cease to be contrary to that Law. And of this kind, is the taking away the Life of an innocent man; as in the case of *Abraham* and his Son. Which though contrary to the Law of Nature, to be done by the Will of Man, or of any Power on Earth; yet may without any inconsistency be in a particular

ticular caſe commanded by God: Becauſe God who *gave* life, may *take it away* when he pleaſes, either by a natural Diſeaſe, or by any other Inſtrument which he thinks fit. Only he who in ſuch a caſe ſhall pretend to be an Inſtrument in the hand of God, muſt ſhow a Commiſſion or Revelation, as *clear* as was That to *Abraham*: Otherwiſe all Impiety and Superſtition may be brought in the place of Religion; as thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, under pretence of doing ſervice to God, are perpetually deſtroying the beſt of his Servants. SERM. XXVIII.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*; As believing in God, ſignifies believing his *Revelations*, as well as his *Nature and Attributes*; ſo it always includes *Obedience* to him likewiſe, when it means That Faith which ſhall be counted to us for Righteouſneſs. *Abraham's Faith*, ſaith St. *James*, *wrought with his Works, and by Works was his Faith made perfect*. And concerning *Ours* in like manner St. *Paul* declares, *Rom.* x. 10. *With the Heart man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth confeſſion is made unto Salvation.*

SERMON XXIX.

Of the GRACE of GOD.

TIT. ii. 11, 12.

For the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men: Teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World.

SERM. XXIX.

IN the *First* Chapter of This Epistle, the Apostle instructs *Titus* in the particulars of his *own* Duty; exhorting him to be diligent in *studying*, stedfast in *holding fast*, painful in *teaching*, and, above all things, exemplary in *practising* the Christian Doctrine. In the *second* chapter, he directs him what instructions he should give to *Others*; to persons in every circumstance of Age, and in every Station of Life; That men of all Ranks and Conditions whatsoever, of all degrees and of all capacities, might know how, by a suitable Behaviour, to *adorn in all things the Doctrine of* God our Saviour; whose *kindness and Love* has been *shed on us abundantly, through* Jesus Christ our Saviour, ch. iii. 6. The Apostle,

poſtle, I ſay, having in *This*, and in the *foregoing* Chapter, inſtructed both *Titus himſelf*, and thoſe who were *under his charge*, in the Great *Branches* of *Moral Duty*; he proceeds in the words of the Text to *inforce* the *Practice* of thoſe Duties by this *emphatical Argument*; that the very *End* and *Deſign* of the *Goſpel of Chriſt* was to *teach* men the neceſſity of ſuch Practice: To *teach* them, that *denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts*, they *ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World; Looking for that Bleſſed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; Who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good Works.*

Sobriety, Righteouſneſs, and Godlineſs, are the *Ends* for the promoting whereof, Chriſt came into the World. Whatever therefore in Any Profeſſion of Religion *tends not* to *promote* theſe Ends, is *uſeleſs and deceitful*: Whatever tends in any degree to *fruſtrate* them, is *pernicious* and *deſtructive*. By this Rule, may eaſily be tried the real and intrinſick *Value* of every *doctrine*; by This, may be weighed the degree of *dangerouſneſs* of every *Errour*, in Religion. Every Notion and Speculation whatſoever, every Form and Ceremony of Any Kind, every external Rite, every inward Opinion, concerning *Faith*, or *Grace*, or the *Merits of Chriſt*, or *any other* Doctrine whatever it be: So far as it leads and influences Men to be more truly *virtuous* and *good*, to have a more conſtant Senſe of *God* upon their Minds, to be more *ſober and temperate*, to have a more ſtrict Regard to *Truth*, *Juſtice*, *Equity* and *Charity*, in the whole Courſe of their Actions; ſo far it makes them *better Chriſtians*. But if, on the contrary, any of theſe things be (as they too frequently are, among *All* Profeſſions of Men; If they be) at any time looked upon as *Equivalents*, to be accepted of God in the *room* and in the *ſtead* of true Virtue; they are Then really deſtructive of all Religion. For *whoſoever* (ſays our Lord) *ſhall break one of theſe Leaſt Commandments*, (ſpeaking of the *eternal Duties* of the *Moral* Law,) *and ſhall teach men ſo*, (that is, ſhall upon Any pretence whatſoever teach men to look upon Other things as of more importance than theſe;) *he ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, he ſhall of all men be the fartheſt from ever entring therein. The *Reaſon* why Chriſt *gave himſelf for us*, was, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good Works*. The *Cauſe* for which was revealed *that Bleſſed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, was, that it might be an effectual *Support* to men in the *Practice of Virtue*, under the various Temptations of a vitious and unrighteous World. The *End and Deſign*, for which God's *graciouſneſs* towards men in the *Forgiveneſs of Sins* was declared in the Goſpel, was to *teach* us the *neceſſity* of *Obedience* for the future, and to *incourage* us in our *ſincere Endeavours* after it. *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men; Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World.* Mat. v. 19.

In the following Diſcourſe upon Theſe Words, I ſhall 1*ſt*, explain *What* is meant by *the Grace of God*. And 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider, *How* This *Grace of God* Teaches us; teaches us in a *peculiar* and *emphatical* manner; that, *Denying ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World.*

I. In the *Firſt* place, the *proper* Signification of the word *Grace*, is *Favour*: *Favour* in *ſuch* a ſenſe, as denotes *Mercy* and *Goodneſs* in a *Superiour*, either *remitting* ſomewhat of his *Own Right*, or *conferring* ſomewhat Beneficial upon *Others*; freely, and without Any obligation of Debt. And becauſe *This* may be done after *various manners*, and in a great *diverſity* of *Inſtances*; hence the word *Grace* in Scripture, is accordingly applied, in a *proportionable diverſity* of *Significations*.

Sometimes it ſignifies thoſe *extraordinary Gifts and Powers* of the Holy Ghoſt, by which the Apoſtles were inabled to *demonſtrate* the *Truth* of their *Commiſſion*, to *preach* their *Doctrine* with *Authority*, to *convince Gainſayers* with *Evidence*, to *govern the Churches* by a proper diſtribution of different *Truſts and Offices*. And the *Gifts* or *Powers*, by which the Apoſtles were enabled to do all theſe things with extraordinary Efficacy and Succeſs,

SERM. XXIX.

ceſs, are *Therefore* called *Grace*, becauſe they are not at all *Natural Acquiſitions*, but *Free Gifts of God*; diſtributed to every one ſeverally, not according to the Will of *Man*, but *at* ſuch *times*, and *in* ſuch *proportions*, and *to* ſuch *Perſons*, and *for* ſuch *Purpoſes*; as God *himſelf* pleaſed. Thus *Rom.* i. 5. *By whom we have received* Grace *and* Apoſtleſhip, *for Obedience to the Faith among all Nations*. That is; Who has *graciouſly* been pleaſed to *ſend forth* Us the Apoſtles, to preach with mighty Works and Demonſtration of the Spirit, in order to bring back the Nations to the Knowledge of God and to the Practice of Virtue, by the Arguments and Motives of the Goſpel of Chriſt. In like manner, ch. xii. 6. *Having then* Gifts, *differing according to the* Grace *that is given to us*, (that is, according to the good pleaſure of God in diſtributing thoſe Gifts;) *whether it be prophecy, let us propheſy*, (or whatever Gift it be, let us employ it diligently,) *according to the proportion of Faith*, i. e. according to the Nature and Uſe of the Gift or Power or *Truſt* committed to our Charge or *Fidelity*: So the word *Faith* evidently ſignifies in This place; and above, in ver. 3. *according as God has dealt to every man the Meaſure of* Faith, i. e. according to the nature and degree of the Power committed to every man's *Truſt* or *Faithfulneſs*. Had *This* ſignification of the word been generally attended to, which is manifeſtly the Apoſtle's true meaning; it might have prevented abundance of weak and unintelligible things, which have ſometimes been ſpoken concerning *God's giving* men *Faith*, and the like. But This, by the way. Another remarkable Paſſage of the ſame Apoſtle, where the word *Grace* plainly ſignifies again the *extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit*, is in *Eph.* iv. 7, 11. *Unto every one of us is given* Grace, *according to the Meaſure of the Gift of Chriſt*: —— *And he gave Some Apoſtles, and Some Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and Some Paſtors and Teachers*. This therefore is the *Firſt* Senſe, wherein the word *Grace* is frequently uſed in the *New Teſtament*: It denotes the *extraordinary Powers* wherewith God was *graciouſly* pleaſed to endue the Apoſtles, in order to enable them to propagate the Goſpel with Authority and Succeſs.

In *Other* Paſſages, the ſame word is made uſe of to ſignify That extraordinary *Aſſiſtance and Support*, which God has ſometimes been pleaſed to afford his Servants, under extraordinary *Difficulties and Trials*. And *This* is called *Grace*, becauſe conſidered as given *particularly* upon *extraordinary* occaſions, over and above the *general Supports* ariſing from the Conſiderations of *Reaſon*, and from the *Motives and Promiſes of the Goſpel* in *general*. Thus when St. *Paul* under ſome *particular* Affliction and Diſtreſs, which he calls *The Meſſenger of Satan to buffet* him, prayed with repeated importunity to have this Trouble removed from him; The Lord ſaid unto him, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9. *My* Grace *is ſufficient for thee*. And when our Saviour foretells his diſciples, that they ſhould be *perſecuted* and *brought before Kings and Rulers for* His *name's ſake*; he tells them at the ſame time, which is another Inſtance of This *Grace* or *Gracious Goodneſs* of *God*, which *will not ſuffer* men *to be tempted above what* they *are able*; He tells them they need not be ſollicitous, *what Anſwer* to make; For *the Holy Ghoſt* ſhould *teach them* in *That Hour*, and *He himſelf* would *give* them *a Mouth and Wiſdom, which all their Adverſaries* ſhould *not be able to gainſay or reſiſt*; Luke xii. 11; and xxi. 14.

A *Third* ſenſe, wherein the word *Grace* is ſometimes made uſe of in the *New Teſtament*, is to expreſs ſuch *Moral Virtues*, as are the *Effects* of men's being influenced by the *Spiritual Motives of the Goſpel*; and the *Practice* of which, preſerves men in the *Favour* of God, and recommends them to his *Gracious Acceptance*. Thus *Eph.* iv. 29. *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Uſe of edifying; that it may miniſter* Grace *unto the Hearers*; That is, that it may promote the Practice of *Virtue* in the World. And 2 *Pet.* iii. 18. *Grow in* Grace; That is, improve more and more in all *virtuous* Behaviour, which may render you *Acceptable* in the *Sight of God*. After the ſame manner of ſpeaking, the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* viii. 1, ſtiles the extraordinary *liberality* of the *Macedonian Churches* to the Poor, *the* Grace *of God beſtowed on them*. And his direction to *Titus*, to *perſwade* the *Corinthians* to *imitate* that exemplary liberality, he *thus* expreſſes, ver. 6. *We deſired Titus, that, as he had begun, ſo he would alſo finiſh in* you *the ſame* Grace *alſo*. And then he adds his *Own*

ex-

exhortation, ſtill in the *very ſame* Style, ver. 7. *Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in Faith, in Utterance, and Knowledge, and in all Diligence, and in your Love to Us; ſee that ye abound in* This Grace *alſo*, the Grace of Liberality and Charity. In theſe Paſſages, 'tis as evident as poſſible, that the word *Grace* denotes the *very ſame*, as *Chriſtian* or *Moral Virtue*. And *Moral Virtues* are plainly *for This reaſon* called by the name of *Grace*, becauſe they *proceed from* and are *founded in* a *Regard to God* in *general*, and in *particular* to *his Will revealed under the Gracious Diſpenſation of the Goſpel of Chriſt*. They are the *Effects* of men's *Converſion to God*; the *Effects* of all the *external* and *internal Influences* of the Goſpel; the *Fruits of the Spirit*. And not only in the Language of *Scripture*, in the *Apoſtles* times; but even at *This day*, in *common Speech*, the word (*Grace*) *ſtill remains* in many Caſes the *ſame* Signification. Thus when *abandoned* and *debauched* perſons are vulgarly ſtiled *Graceleſs*; the Intent of That denomination never is to *excuſe*, but always to *aggravate* the Fault of the perſons ſo ſtiled. It never means any Defect on *God*'s part, as if *He* afforded them not the *Capacities* of Religion and Virtue; but always on *their own* part only, that All the Means and Aſſiſtances of Religion are beſtowed on them *in vain*, and *have not Influence* ſufficient to *reform* them.

To proceed: *Another* Signification of the word *Grace* in Scripture, is to expreſs that *merciful Acceptance* of *Repentance and Amendment*, whereby *God* is pleaſed, not out of any *obligation of Juſtice*, but *in gracious Goodneſs*, to reſtore men to his Favour. In *This* ſenſe, St. *Paul* ſays of *Himſelf*, *I am not meet to be called an Apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the Church of God: But by the* Grace *of* God, (that is, by his *gracious Acceptance* of my ſincere Intentions,) *I am what I am*. In like manner, when the *Doctrine of* Chriſt, as diſtinguiſhed from the *Law of* Moſes, is by the Evangeliſt ſtyled Grace *and Truth*; and when the *Apoſtles Preaching*, is by St. *Luke* called *The Word* (or Declaration) *of God's* Grace; and when St. *Paul* declares, that repenting Sinners *are juſtified freely by his* Grace; and blames thoſe, as the moſt *pernicious Perverters* of his Doctrine, who think they may *continue in Sin, that* Grace *may abound*: 'Tis evident the word *Grace*, in all theſe Paſſages, ſignifies That *merciful* and *compaſſionate* diſpoſition of the Divine Nature, whereby God freely *remits* of his *Right of Puniſhment*; and receives penitent Sinners upon *more gracious Terms*, and to *greater degrees of his Favour*, than he was bound to do by *any obligation* of *Juſtice*.

1 Cor. xv. 9. Joh. i. 17. Acts xiv. 3. Rom. iii. 24. Rom. vi. 1.

And *hence* it is, that in the *Laſt* place, the *Goſpel itſelf*, as being the *Great* and *Standing* Declaration of God's *Mercy and Goodneſs* towards men, ſhown forth in the *free Pardon and Forgiveneſs* of Sin, upon the *gracious Terms* of Repentance and Amendment; hence the *Goſpel itſelf*, I ſay, is in the *New Teſtament* very frequently meant by this Phraſe, *the Grace of God*. Thus *Col.* i. 6. *Since the day ye heard of it, and knew* the Grace of God *in Truth*: That is, from the Time ye were inſtructed in the *Doctrine of the Goſpel*. And 2 *Theſ.* ii. 16. *Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, and God even our Father, —— hath given us —— good Hope through* Grace; that is, through the *gracious Promiſes of the Goſpel*. Again; 2 Tim. ii. 1. *Thou therefore, my Son, be ſtrong in the* Grace *that is in Chriſt Jeſus*, (that is, Be Faithful and Diligent, in preaching the Goſpel;) *And the Things that thou haſt heard of Me, —— the ſame commit thou to Faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach Others alſo*. In like manner; *the Prophets —— prophecying of the* Grace *that ſhould ſhould come*, is, their foretelling the Revelation of *the Goſpel*. And Some among the *Galatians*, *falling from* Grace; means their rejecting the Privileges of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, when they claimed to be *juſtified by* their obſerving the Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh Law*. To give but one Inſtance more: The Queſtion St. *Paul* puts, *Rom.* vi. 15. *Shall we ſin, becauſe we are not under the Law, but under* Grace? is, in ſenſe, plainly This: Shall the *Mercy*, the *Compaſſion and gracious Goodneſs* of God, declared in the *Goſpel* much more expreſly than under the *Moſaick Law*; ſhall it be an incouragement to us to continue in Sin? God forbid. And Thus therefore likewiſe in the words of the Text: *The* Grace *of God*, that is, the *gracious Doctrine of the* Goſpel, has been declared *to all men*; *Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs*, and ſo on. The Apoſtle here very *expreſly* explains his own words. He is not ſpeaking of *That Grace* of God, which *operates in* or *upon* men; but of

1 Pet. i. 10. Gal. v. 4.

SERM. XXIX.

ceſs, are *Therefore* called *Grace*, becauſe they are not at all *Natural Acquiſitions*, but *Free Gifts of God*, diſtributed to every one ſeverally, not according to the Will of *Man*, but *at* ſuch *times*, and *in* ſuch *proportions*, and *to* ſuch *Perſons*, and *for* ſuch *Purpoſes*, as God *himſelf* pleaſed. Thus *Rom.* i. 5. *By whom we have received* Grace *and* Apoſtleſhip, *for Obedience to the Faith among all Nations*. That is; Who has *graciouſly* been pleaſed to *ſend forth* Us the Apoſtles, to preach with mighty Works and Demonſtration of the Spirit, in order to bring back the Nations to the Knowledge of God and to the Practice of Virtue, by the Arguments and Motives of the Goſpel of Chriſt. In like manner, ch. xii. 6. *Having then* Gifts, *differing according to the* Grace *that is given to us*, (that is, according to the good pleaſure of God in diſtributing thoſe Gifts;) *whether it be prophecy, let us propheſy*, (or whatever Gift it be, let us employ it diligently,) *according to the proportion of Faith*, i. e. according to the Nature and Uſe of the Gift or Power or *Truſt* committed to our Charge or *Fidelity*: So the word *Faith* evidently ſignifies in This place; and above, in ver. 3. *according as God has dealt to every man the Meaſure of* Faith, i. e. according to the nature and degree of the Power committed to every man's *Truſt* or *Faithfulneſs*. Had *This* ſignification of the word been generally attended to, which is manifeſtly the Apoſtle's true meaning; it might have prevented abundance of weak and unintelligible things, which have ſometimes been ſpoken concerning *God's giving* men *Faith*, and the like. But This, by the way. Another remarkable Paſſage of the ſame Apoſtle, where the word *Grace* plainly ſignifies again the *extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit*, is in *Eph.* iv. 7, 11. *Unto every one of us is given* Grace, *according to the Meaſure of the Gift of Chriſt*: —— *And he gave Some Apoſtles, and Some Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and Some Paſtors and Teachers*. This therefore is the *Firſt* Senſe, wherein the word *Grace* is frequently uſed in the *New Teſtament*: It denotes the *extraordinary Powers* wherewith God was *graciouſly* pleaſed to endue the Apoſtles, in order to enable them to propagate the Goſpel with Authority and Succeſs.

In *Other* Paſſages, the ſame word is made uſe of to ſignify That extraordinary *Aſſiſtance and Support*, which God has ſometimes been pleaſed to afford his Servants, under extraordinary *Difficulties and Trials*. And *This* is called *Grace*, becauſe conſidered as given *particularly* upon *extraordinary* occaſions, over and above the *general Supports* ariſing from the Conſiderations of *Reaſon*, and from the *Motives and Promiſes of the Goſpel* in *general*. Thus when St. *Paul* under ſome *particular* Affliction and Diſtreſs, which he calls *The Meſſenger of Satan to buffet* him, prayed with repeated importunity to have this Trouble removed from him; The Lord ſaid unto him, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9. *My* Grace *is ſufficient for thee*. And when our Saviour foretells his diſciples, that they ſhould be *perſecuted* and *brought before Kings and Rulers for* His *name's ſake*; he tells them at the ſame time, which is another Inſtance of This *Grace* or *Gracious Goodneſs* of *God*, which *will not ſuffer* men *to be tempted above what* they *are able*; He tells them they need not be ſollicitous, *what Anſwer* to make; For *the Holy Ghoſt* ſhould *teach them* in *That Hour*, and *He himſelf* would *give* them *a Mouth and Wiſdom, which all their Adverſaries* ſhould *not be able to gainſay or reſiſt*; Luke xii. 11; and xxi. 14.

A *Third* ſenſe, wherein the word *Grace* is ſometimes made uſe of in the *New Teſtament*, is to expreſs ſuch *Moral Virtues*, as are the *Effects* of men's being influenced by the *Spiritual Motives of the Goſpel*; and the *Practice* of which, preſerves men in the *Favour* of God, and recommends them to his *Gracious Acceptance*. Thus *Eph.* iv. 29. *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Uſe of edifying; that it may miniſter* Grace *unto the Hearers*; That is, that it may promote the Practice of *Virtue* in the World. And 2 *Pet.* iii. 18. *Grow in* Grace; That is, improve more and more in all *virtuous* Behaviour, which may render you *Acceptable* in the *Sight of God*. After the ſame manner of ſpeaking, the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* viii. 1, ſtiles the extraordinary *liberality* of the *Macedonian Churches* to the Poor, *the* Grace *of God beſtowed on them*. And his direction to *Titus*, to *perſwade* the *Corinthians* to *imitate* that exemplary liberality, he *thus* expreſſes, ver. 6. *We deſired Titus, that, as he had begun, ſo he would alſo finiſh in* you *the ſame* Grace *alſo*. And then he adds his *Own*

ex-

SERM. XXIX.

exhortation, ſtill in the *very ſame* Style, ver. 7. *Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in Faith, in Utterance, and Knowledge, and in all Diligence, and in your Love to Us; ſee that ye abound in* This Grace *alſo*, the Grace of Liberality and Charity. In theſe Paſſages, 'tis as evident as poſſible, that the word *Grace* denotes the *very ſame*, as *Chriſtian* or *Moral Virtue*. And *Moral Virtues* are plainly *for This reaſon* called by the name of *Grace*, becauſe they *proceed from* and are *founded in* a *Regard to God* in *general*, and in *particular* to *his Will revealed under the Gracious Diſpenſation of the Goſpel of Chriſt*. They are the *Effects* of men's *Converſion to God*; the *Effects* of all the *external* and *internal Influences* of the Goſpel; the *Fruits of the Spirit*. And not only in the Language of *Scripture*, in the *Apoſtles* times; but even at *This day*, in *common Speech*, the word (*Grace*) *ſtill remains* in many Caſes the *ſame* Signification. Thus when *abandoned* and *debauched* perſons are vulgarly ſtiled *Graceleſs*; the Intent of That denomination never is to *excuſe*, but always to *aggravate* the Fault of the perſons ſo ſtiled. It never means any Defect on *God*'s part, as if *He* afforded them not the *Capacities* of Religion and Virtue; but always on *their own* part only, that All the Means and Aſſiſtances of Religion are beſtowed on them *in vain*, and *have not Influence* ſufficient to *reform* them.

To proceed: *Another* Signification of the word *Grace* in Scripture, is to expreſs that *merciful Acceptance* of *Repentance and Amendment*, whereby *God* is pleaſed, not out of any *obligation of Juſtice*, but *in gracious Goodneſs*, to reſtore men to his Favour. In *This* ſenſe, St. *Paul* ſays of *Himſelf*, *I am not meet to be called an Apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the Church of God: But by the* Grace *of* God, (that is, by his *gracious Acceptance* of my ſincere Intentions,) *I am what I am*. In like manner, when the *Doctrine of* Chriſt, as diſtinguiſhed from the *Law of* Moſes, is by the Evangeliſt ſtyled Grace *and Truth*; and when the *Apoſtles Preaching*, is by St. *Luke* called *The Word* (or Declaration) *of God's* Grace; and when St. *Paul* declares, that repenting Sinners *are juſtified freely by his* Grace; and blames thoſe, as the moſt *pernicious Perverters* of his Doctrine, who think they may *continue in Sin, that* Grace *may abound*: 'Tis evident the word *Grace*, in all theſe Paſſages, ſignifies That *merciful* and *compaſſionate* diſpoſition of the Divine Nature, whereby God freely *remits* of his *Right of Puniſhment*; and receives penitent Sinners upon *more gracious Terms*, and to *greater degrees of his Favour*, than he was bound to do by *any obligation* of *Juſtice*.

1 Cor. xv. 9. Joh. i. 17. Acts xiv. 3. Rom. iii. 24. Rom. vi. 1.

And *hence* it is, that in the *Laſt* place, the *Goſpel itſelf*, as being the *Great* and *Standing* Declaration of God's *Mercy and Goodneſs* towards men, ſhown forth in the *free Pardon and Forgiveneſs* of Sin, upon the *gracious Terms* of Repentance and Amendment; hence the *Goſpel itſelf*, I ſay, is in the *New Teſtament* very frequently meant by this Phraſe, *the Grace of God*. Thus *Col.* i. 6. *Since the day ye heard of it, and knew* the Grace of God *in Truth*: That is, from the Time ye were inſtructed in the *Doctrine of the Goſpel*. And 2 *Theſ.* ii. 16. *Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, and God even our Father, —— hath given us —— good Hope through* Grace; that is, through the *gracious Promiſes of the Goſpel*. Again; 2 Tim. ii. 1. *Thou therefore, my Son, be ſtrong in the* Grace *that is in Chriſt Jeſus*, (that is, Be Faithful and Diligent, in preaching the Goſpel;) *And the Things that thou haſt heard of Me, —— the ſame commit thou to Faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach Others alſo*. In like manner; *the Prophets —— prophecying of the* Grace *that ſhould ſhould come*, is, their foretelling the Revelation of *the Goſpel*. And Some among the *Galatians*, *falling from* Grace; means their rejecting the Privileges of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, when they claimed to be *juſtified by* their obſerving the Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh Law*. To give but one Inſtance more: The Queſtion St. *Paul* puts, *Rom.* vi. 15. *Shall we ſin, becauſe we are not under the Law, but under* Grace? is, in ſenſe, plainly This: Shall the *Mercy*, the *Compaſſion and gracious Goodneſs* of God, declared in the *Goſpel* much more expreſly than under the *Moſaick Law*; ſhall it be an incouragement to us to continue in Sin? God forbid. And Thus therefore likewiſe in the words of the Text: *The* Grace *of God*, that is, the *gracious Doctrine of the* Goſpel, has been declared *to all men*; *Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs*, and ſo on. The Apoſtle here very *expreſly* explains his own words. He is not ſpeaking of *That Grace* of God, which *operates in* or *upon* men; but of

1 Pet. i. 10. Gal. v. 4.

SERM. XXIX.

That Grace, which Teaches them, that *Denying Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts*, they *ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World:*

The *Additional* words, (*which bringeth Salvation*,) are, in the Original, of ambiguous conſtruction; and may equally ſignify, either, as we render them, *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath* appeared *to* all *men*; or, *The Grace of God hath appeared, bringing* Salvation *unto* all *men*. If we underſtand them in the *former* ſenſe, (*The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath* appeared *to* all *men*;) they are *Then* of the ſame import with thoſe *other* expreſſions, Rom. x. 18. *Their Sound is gone forth into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World*; and *Col.* i. 23. *The Hope of the Goſpel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under Heaven.* If they are underſtood in the Latter ſenſe; (*The Grace of God hath appeared, bringing* Salvation *unto* all *men*;) the meaning of them *Then* is the ſame, as in the *following* Expreſſions of Scripture; that Chriſt *has aboliſhed Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Goſpel*; that God *will have All men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*; being *not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that All ſhould come to Repentance.* In whichſoever of *theſe two ſenſes* the words of the Text be taken; the *Meaning* of them, upon the whole, amounts to the *Same*; that the Deſign of God in the gracious Declarations of the Goſpel, is to bring *all men*, by the Promiſe of Pardon, to Repentance and Amendment *here*, and thereby to eternal Salvation *hereafter.* The *Senſe of the* Propoſition is *plain*: The only *difficulty* here, is that which ariſes, and indeed very obviouſly, from comparing the *actual Event* of things, with the *Declarations* of God's gracious *Intention and Deſign.* If God *deſigned* by the gracious Terms of the Goſpel to bring *all men* to Salvation; how comes the *Extent* of it to be confined within ſo *narrow* a Compaſs, and the *Effect* of it to be in experience ſo inconſiderable, even where in Profeſſion it ſeems to have univerſally prevailed? The *Anſwer* to This, is; that in all *moral* matters, the *Intention* or *Deſign* of God, *never* ſignifies (as it does *Always* in *Natural* things) an *Intention* of *the Event, actually* and *neceſſarily* to be accompliſhed; but (which *Alone* is *conſiſtent* with the *nature* of *Moral* things,) an *Intention* of all the *Means*, neceſſary on *His* part to the putting That Event into the Power of the proper and immediate Agents. For inſtance: With *intention* that *all men* ſhould act *reaſonably*, God endues them with the *Faculty* of *natural Reaſon.* The *Event*, whether after This they will *act reaſonably* or no, *muſt* depend upon *their own* Choice and Care: Becauſe *the very Faculty* or *Power* of acting *reaſonably*, does *neceſſarily and eſſentially* include in it a *Power* of acting likewiſe *unreaſonably.* The caſe is the *very ſame* with reſpect to the Method of bringing men to Salvation by the *Goſpel.* God has commanded the Goſpel to be preached to the *whole World.* The merciful *Conditions*, and the gracious *Means and Aſſiſtances* of the Goſpel, are *ſufficient* to bring *all men* to Salvation; except ſuch as either willfully *reject* it, when fairly and reaſonably propoſed to them; or who *profeſſing* to *embrace* it, yet *obey* it *not.* For, as for Thoſe to whom it was either never *at all*, or (which is much the ſame thing,) never *reaſonably* preached, their caſe is exactly the ſame with regard to the *Goſpel*, as the caſe of *ſuch others* is with regard to *Natural Reaſon*, who either totally or in great meaſure want That natural Faculty. Every man ſhall be *accepted according to what he* Hath, *and not according to what he* hath not, 2 *Cor.* viii. 12. God therefore *willeth all men to be ſaved*; (juſt in the ſame manner as he willeth all men to act rationally:) And yet This does not hinder them from *deſtroying themſelves* by wilfully *rejecting* That Salvation. For tho' *the Grace of God has* indeed *appeared to all men*, and is *ſufficient* alſo to *bring all men to Salvation*; yet it effects This no otherwiſe than by *Teaching them*, as the Apoſtle *proceeds* in the Text, (which is the *Second Particular* I propoſed to conſider;) *teaching them*, in a *peculiar* and *emphatical* manner, *that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World.*

II. Now *How* the Goſpel does This, is not a point which needs much *inlargement.* 'Tis what our Saviour and his Apoſtles inculcate in the *whole New Teſtament*, from the One End to the Other. The *Practice of Virtue*, or *Living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly*, is the *End* and *Deſign* of all Religion. God is Himſelf a Being of infinite *Holineſs* and *Goodneſs*, and by no other way than by *imitating* theſe Perfections

fections can Any Creature become acceptable in his Sight. By the Light of *Nature and Reaſon* therefore, men are bound to the Practice of theſe Virtues. But becauſe their very *Beſt* Performances are always *defective*; and Thoſe who have *tranſgreſſed* in any plain Inſtances, ſtand in need of particular *Pardon*; and Methods of mens *own* Invention to appeaſe the Anger of God had continually introduced numberleſs vain and deluſive *Superſtitions*; therefore, in compaſſion to the Weakneſs of Mankind, and to cure theſe Great Evils, God was pleaſed to ſend them an Inſtructor from Heaven, to *teach* them in a *more effectual* manner than any ever *before* diſcovered, how that *denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World.* The Goſpel, I ſay, teaches us *This*, in a method *more effectual* than *Any* foregoing: *By* giving, even to the *Meaneſt* Capacities, the plaineſt and fulleſt, the perfecteſt and moſt diſtinct Account, of the Excellency and Extent of *Moral Virtue*; as in our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount. *By* giving, even to perſons of the *Loweſt* Abilities, clearer Inſtructions concerning the *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, than were uſually attained even by the moſt *Learned Philoſophers* amidſt the dark Superſtitions of the *Pagan* World. *By* ſhowing to all men, that God is a Being *of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity*; So far *hating Wickedneſs*, as that he did not think fit to pardon Sin without ſo great a Teſtimony againſt it as the Death of his Son; And yet, at the ſame time, of ſuch eſſential *Mercy and Goodneſs*, that he would rather give his own Son a Ranſom for Sinners, than not find a method of pardoning them, conſiſtent with the Wiſdom of his infinite and eternal Government. *By* giving us conſequently the *Example* of *Chriſt*, in his Life, and in his Sufferings; the *Aſſiſtances* of his *Spirit*; the Aſſurance of a *Reward for Virtue*, in a happy immortality; and a more expreſs declaration of his *Wrath from Heaven againſt all Unrighteouſneſs and Ungodlineſs of men.* By *Theſe Means* does the Goſpel in the moſt effectual manner *Teach us, That denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* And to *Them* who are thus taught by it, and to *Them only*, it is *the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation.* 'Tis unto *Them*, as the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it, *the Savour of Life unto Life*; but unto the Wicked, *the Savour of Death unto Death.*

SERM. XXIX.

SERMON

SERMON XXX.

Of the GRACE of GOD.

PHIL. ii. latter part of the 12th, and the 13th verſe.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.

SERM. XXX.

THERE is no one Queſtion in the whole Syſtem of Divinity, which has raiſed greater Controverſies in the Church of God, than That concerning the Extent of the *Grace* of *God* and the *Power* of *Man*. *Some*, in order to vindicate God from being the Author of Sin, have been ſo ſollicitous to maintain the perfect Freedom of *Men's* Faculties, and their Liberty of chooſing Good or Evil, that they either *have*, or have been thought *to have*, diminiſhed from the Abſoluteneſs of the Sovereignty, or from the Efficacy of the Grace of God. They have been *thought*, I ſay, to diminiſh from the Grace of God. For whether they have *really* done ſo, or only by their Adverſaries been *repreſented* as doing ſo; is not very evident. In almoſt *all* Controverſies, what Men *ſay* for *Themſelves*, and what their *Adverſaries* infer or *repreſent* them as ſaying, are generally two very different Things: And they who will not be at the pains to conſider diſtinctly what *each* ſide alledges for *itſelf*, but will judge of *Either* by

by the character or repreſentation made of it by the *Other* only; will for ever be led into erroneous judgments concerning Men and Things, and continue unavoidably ignorant of the True State of the Matter in Queſtion, whatſoever it be. Whether therefore they who in Antient Times were repreſented as *Deniers* of the *Grace* of *God*, were rightly charged with ſo doing or no, does not certainly appear; becauſe the *Ground* of that charge, was only their aſſerting the *Freedom of the Will of Man*; which though their *Adverſaries* judged to infer a Denial of the Sufficiency of the Power or Grace of God, yet perhaps *They Themſelves* ſaw no ſuch Conſequence of it. However That be; *Others*, in the contrary Extreme, that they might be ſure not to aſcribe too little to the Efficacy of the Divine Grace, have ſuppoſed men to have *no natural Powers at all* of Acting or Willing, *no Uſe* of the original Faculties given them at their Creation, *no Liberty of Will* or Freedom of Choice, in matters of Morality and Religion. By which Doctrine they have *conſequently*, (even themſelves *ſeeing* and *acknowledging* the conſequence,) introduced an abſolute *Neceſſity* or *Fatality* upon Men's Actions. From whence it follows, in the next ſtep of deduction, (though this indeed they are not ſo willing to ſee;) but in Truth it *does* neceſſarily and unavoidably follow; that *God Himſelf* and not *Man* will be the Author of Sin. SERM. XXX.

Something not unlike to This, has happened in *another* Queſtion concerning the *Liberty* of the Will of *Man*, and the *Preſcience* or *Foreknowledge* of *God*. *Some*, conſidering that without Liberty of the Will, there can be no Religion, no Virtue or Vice, no juſt Puniſhment or reaſonable Reward, have, in order, to remove an Objection which they judged would otherwiſe lie hard againſt ſo important a Truth, *denied*, or ſeemed *to deny*, God's foreknowledge of future and free Events. *Others* on the contrary, intent upon magnifying the Glory of the Divine Attributes, and ſollicitous to ſecure the including all poſſible future Events within the Compaſs of God's Fore-knowledge, have affirmed all the Actions of Men to be Neceſſary and Determined abſolutely, by a Chain of certain and unalterable Cauſes. The Conſequence of which unavoidably is, that Man in reality is no more capable of Morality or Religion, than a Beaſt that periſhes, or than a lifeleſs Machine.

The *Truth*, in *Both* theſe controverſies, is; that there is Something in *Each* part of the Queſtion, which muſt needs be acknowledged to be True; and yet 'tis equally neceſſary that it *be always ſo only* acknowledged, and *ſo only* underſtood, as to be conſiſtent with what on the *Other* part of the Queſtion muſt at the ſame Time, and for the ſame Reaſons, of Neceſſity be acknowledged too. For otherwiſe, we do but endeavour to eſtabliſh *One* Truth at the Expence of *Another*; which, at the concluſion of the Argument, is not indeed confirming *Either* of them, but deſtroying *Both*. Thus, for inſtance, the *Freedom of Men's Will*, whatever be the Nature and the Degree of that Freedom, muſt upon no Account be any thing in any wiſe inconſiſtent with any of the *Perfections of God*; becauſe the Attributes of the Divine Nature are *Neceſſary* in themſelves, abſolutely and unalterably, and antecedent to the Production of all created Beings. And on the other ſide, *no Attribute of the Divine Nature*, ſuch as *Foreknowledge* in particular, can poſſibly be ſuch as to take away the *Liberty of the Will of Man*; becauſe then it would conſequently deſtroy ſome of the Other equally neceſſary Perfections of God, ſuch as Juſtice and Goodneſs, which cannot poſſibly be deſtroyed. Since therefore neither the *Foreknowledge of God*, nor the *Liberty of Man*, can without a plain contradiction be denied; it follows unavoidably, that the *Foreknowledge* of *God* muſt be *of ſuch a Nature*, as is not inconſiſtent with the *Liberty of Man*. That is to ſay; it cannot be a Knowledge of the ſame ſort of Species, as is the Knowledge of neceſſary and determined Events, ariſing from a View of the whole Chain or Series of neceſſary Cauſes producing thoſe Events: but it muſt be a Knowledge quite of another Nature; a Power, difficult indeed for Us to frame a *clear* conception of, but yet not impoſſible to have a Notion of in general. For as a *Man* who has no influence over Another perſon's Actions: can yet often perceive beforehand what That Other will do; and a *wiſer* and more experienced Man, will ſtill with greater *probability* foreſee what Another, whoſe Diſpoſition he is perfectly acquainted with, will in certain Circumſtances do; and an *Angel*, with ſtill much

SERM. XXX.

much leſs *degrees of Error*, may have a farther Proſpect into Men's future Actions: ſo 'tis very reaſonable to apprehend, that *God*, without influencing Men's Wills by his Power, yet by his Foreſight cannot but have as much *Certainer* a Knowledge of future Free Events, than either Men or Angels can poſſibly have, as the *Perfection* of *His* nature is greater than that of *Theirs*.

In like manner, in that *Other* Queſtion, which is the Subject-matter of my Text: Whatever Power Men be ſuppoſed to have in the Uſe of their *natural Faculties*, 'tis evident it cannot be ſuch as in any wiſe to diminiſh the Senſe they ought to have of their continual *Dependance* upon *God*; becauſe thoſe *very* Powers and *natural* Faculties, are *themſelves* entirely the Gift of *God*, and not any thing at all of *our own* procuring, *as of our ſelves*. So that thoſe who have been charged with aſcribing *the moſt* to the Power of Men's own Wills, did not perhaps (as their *Adverſaries* conceived) *intend* to derogate any thing from Men's true Dependance upon God: For it cannot be imagined that any reaſonable Men ſhould contend, (neither did their Argument require it,) that any One ſhould in any Action, or in any Degree, be Independent on his Maker. On the other ſide; whatever be ſuppoſed to be the Power and Efficacy of the *Grace* of *God*, even where it has the moſt *effectual* Influence; yet it muſt upon no account be underſtood to be ſuch as to over-rule the Liberty of Men's Will and Choice, and render their Actions *neceſſary*; becauſe This would be to remove the whole Foundation of Religion, by entirely deſtroying the Morality of Men's Actions, and taking away the very Nature of Virtue and Vice. Since therefore neither the Influence of the *Divine Grace*, nor the proper *Power of Men* in the uſe of their *natural* Faculties, can without an evident contradiction be denied; it follows unavoidably, that the *Grace of God* muſt of neceſſity always be underſtood to have the nature of a *moral Aſſiſtance only*, which does perfectly agree with Men's *Free uſe of their Faculties*; and that it is *not* in the nature of a *phyſical compulſion*, which is altogether inconſiſtent with Men's doing any Thing *themſelves*. The Apoſtle perfectly expreſſes this whole Notion, in the Words of the Text: *Work out* your own *Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; *for it is* God *that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure*. He does not ſay, *Work out your own Salvation* your ſelves, *as having* no Need *of the Grace of God*: Neither does he ſay on the contrary, *The Grace of God worketh* All *in you, and therefore ye need not do any thing* your ſelves: But, aſcribing to each part its proper Office, he ſays, *Work* ye *out your own Salvation, becauſe* the Grace of God (the Motives and Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel) *gives you Power ſo to do*.

The principal Argument alledged by Thoſe, who think the Influence of the Divine Grace to be *ſo* efficacious as to *neceſſitate* Men's Actions, is, that it ſeems to Them *unworthy* of the Supreme Power, Sovereignty and Majeſty of God to do any thing *ineffectually*, or to permit any Act of his to be *reſiſted and fruſtrated* by the Power of frail and mortal Men. And, were the Power *of God* the matter in queſtion, This Argument would indeed be undoubtedly good. But in *Moral* matters, where whatever is not done *voluntarily and without Compulſion*, is not done *at all*, the Caſe is very different. For in *theſe* matters, to influence a Moral Agent with ſuch an Efficacy as *cannot be reſiſted*, is entirely to deſtroy the Morality of the Action, to take away the whole Nature of Virtue and Vice, and to make all Reward or Puniſhment impoſſible or unjuſt. So far therefore is it from being unworthy of God, to *forbear* exerting his irreſiſtible Power in *theſe* Caſes; that, on the contrary, it would be altogether unworthy of him to *exerciſe* That Power; becauſe it would be a ſubverting of his whole Deſign, in creating rational and intelligent Beings at all. *Moral Agents*, muſt be influenced only by *Moral Motives*; by Reaſon and Argument, by Perſuaſion and Conviction, by Hopes and Fears. The *Efficacy* therefore of the Grace of *God*, *can* conſiſt *only* in laying before men *ſtrong Arguments* for their *Conviction*, and giving them ſufficient *Helps* and *Aſſiſtances* to overcome whatever would hinder them from acting according to ſuch conviction. Any *other* influence than what is of this *moral* nature; any Influence that amounted to *Force*, and could not be reſiſted; far from being truly *efficacious* to make Men *good and virtuous*, would on the contrary make it as

impoſſible

impoſſible for them to have any Virtue or Goodneſs at all, as it is that a *Clock* or a *Watch* ſhould be virtuous and praiſe-worthy. SERM. XXX.

The Sum is This: In order to give *God* his due Honour and Glory, and to keep up in Men's Minds a juſt Senſe of their continual Dependence upon him; 'tis neceſſary that we at all times acknowledge, that all our Powers and *natural* Faculties *themſelves* are entirely at firſt *derived* to us from God's free Goodneſs, and continually *preſerved* to us meerly by the ſame good pleaſure; and that neither our *Being*, nor *any Power* we have, is in any wiſe owing to Ourſelves: That, much more, every *ſupernatural* Sufficiency, every *extraordinary* Degree of Aſſiſtance, every *revealed* Means of Knowledge, every *New* Motive to Virtue or Determent from Vice, every *Direction or Guidance in the way of Life* which we receive from the Knowledge of things *inviſible*, and from the kind Influence of the *Divine Spirit*; is wholly the *Gift* or *Grace of God*: That the *Promiſe* of *Heaven* and of *eternal Happineſs* at all, as the Reward of our beſt *Endeavours* and moſt perfect *Services*, if ſuch were *poſſible* to be performed by us; that even *This* alſo is merely God's *free Bounty*, and *undeſerved Gift*, to unprofitable Servants: All This, I ſay, is of neceſſity to be acknowledged, in order to give *God* his *due Honour* and *juſt Glory*.

At the ſame time, that the *Nature of Virtue and Vice* may not be taken away; 'tis alſo of no leſs neceſſity to be acknowledged, that as the natural *Faculties* wherewith God hath originally endowed Men, are in their own Power either to *make uſe of* or to *neglect*; ſo the ſuper-natural *Aſſiſtances* afforded Men by the Revelation of the Goſpel, and by the Influence of the Divine Grace, are ſtill *but* in the Nature of *Aſſiſtances*, which may either be *complied with* or *rejected*: And the Gift of eternal Life, as it is the *free* Gift of God, which Men could not poſſibly deſerve, or claim, by virtue of any Work or Duty which they were capable of performing; ſo it is *not* a *forced Gift*, *impoſed* upon them whether they will or no; but ſuch a *free Gift*, as requires the *concurrence of* their *own Endeavours*, in *applying* and *making Uſe of* the Divine Aſſiſtance which enables them to obtain it. For this reaſon, the Apoſtle St. *Peter* exhorts men to *grow in Grace*, as a Duty depending upon their *own Endeavours*, 2 *Pet.* iii. 18; and St. *Paul* admoniſhes Men, *not* to *quench* or *grieve* the *Holy Spirit of God*, who *will not* forcibly *ſtrive* with thoſe which reſiſt his good Motions; and Men are frequently blamed in Scripture *for receiving the Grace of God* in vain; for reſiſting *the Holy Ghoſt*, and for rejecting *the Counſel of God againſt themſelves*.

The *Cauſe* of erroneous Opinions, in This and moſt other Queſtions about which there have at any time been raiſed any controverſies, is generally This; that Men attending to *One* point only, and being ſollicitous to oppoſe ſtrongly ſome *particular* Error, have been apt to do it in ſuch a manner, as has carried them out beyond the Truth of the Argument, and prevented them from guarding againſt being expoſed to Error in ſome contrary Extreme. Thus in diſputing againſt the Errors of the Church of *Rome*, incautious perſons have frequently been betrayed by an unwiſe Zeal to make uſe of ſuch Arguments, as they were not aware might at the ſame time be alledged by Others of an oppoſite Perſwaſion, with the ſame Force againſt themſelves. And nothing is more common, than for Others on the contrary, in the heat of Controverſy with ſome of their Brethren who differ from them, to draw ſuch Arguments from Church-Authority, and General Councils, and the like; as they are not enough ſenſible may on any other occaſion be uſed againſt Themſelves by Thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, with at leaſt as Great and perhaps Greater Force. Thus in like manner in the preſent caſe; If Any perſons, ſollicitous to maintain the Liberty of Man's Will, have at any time aſſerted ſuch a Power in Men's Uſe of their natural Faculties, as to make them *not dependent* upon God; or ſuch as may *of Right* claim the Reward of Heaven, and not *of Free Grace* and *undeſerved Promiſe*; Theſe indeed, (if any Such have been, and they have not rather been *miſtaken* by their Adverſaries,) Theſe, I ſay, *going about to eſtabliſh* their own *righteouſneſs*, (in the Senſe St. *Paul* blames, *Rom.* x. 3.) and *not ſubmitting themſelves unto the righteouſneſs of God*, have indeed *fruſtrated the Grace of God*, (as the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaks again, *Gal.* ii. 21; *For if righteouſneſs comes by* This way, *then* undoubtedly *Chriſt is dead in vain*. But then Others on the *contrary part*, ſollicitous (as they conceived) to maintain God's abſolute

SERM. XXX.

ſolute Sovereignty in all things, and the Efficacy of Divine Grace; to magnify the work of God in Men, and to depreſs and humble the Vanity of thoſe who aſſume Any thing to themſelves as *of themſelves*; have almoſt perpetually urged ſuch Arguments againſt their Adverſaries, as they were not aware might by the Enemies of all Religion, the Aſſerters of Neceſſity and Fate, be with equal Strength alledged againſt *Themſelves*. And by *exalting* (as They thought) the Grace of God into an *irreſiſtible Efficacy*, they have conſequently made it, in truth and reality, to be of *No Efficacy at all*. For in matters of morality and religion, That *only* is of any Effect, which makes men, in the *moral* ſenſe, *better* than they would otherwiſe be: And then *only* are they morally *Better*, when by *moral* Motives, by conviction of *Truth* and *Reaſon*, by well-grounded *Hopes* and juſt *Fears*, they are perſwaded and prevailed upon to love, and to chuſe freely what is *Right* and *Good*. If by any *irreſiſtible* Influence they are *compelled* to do it, the beſt Action in the World has no longer any Goodneſs in it; being not done by *Them*, any more than by any *material* or *unintelligent Inſtrument*, to which no man ever aſcribes either *Good* or *Evil*. The *Truth* therefore is plainly This: If we will frame to ourſelves right Notions of Religion, Notions which truly tend to the Glory of *God*, and to promote Virtue and Obedience in *Men*; the *Power* aſcribed to *Men*, muſt neither on the one ſide be ſuppoſed to be ſuch, that thereby men can *Merit* any thing, as of *themſelves*; neither on the other ſide muſt the Influence of the *Power* or *Grace of God* be imagined to be ſuch, as will make vain and needleſs our own Endeavours. But the *Grace of God*, manifeſted in the *merciful Terms of the Goſpel*, in the *clear Revelation of a Future State, and of a Judgment to come*, in God's *declared Acceptance of Repentance through Chriſt*, and in the *promiſed Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit*; This *Grace of God*, I ſay, effectually *enables* men to perform their Duty. And the *Power and Will of Man*, applying and making *Uſe* of that Aſſiſtance to an actual Improvement in Virtue, brings forth on *its* part, thoſe acceptable Fruits of the Spirit, which wicked men are *therefore* juſtly condemned for not bringing forth, becauſe *They alſo* had the means of Grace offered and propoſed to them, but wilfully and obſtinately refuſed to be amended thereby. *God* hath, *of his good pleaſure*, or of his free Grace, *given them both to will and to do*; and yet, through their own perverſeneſs and obſtinate diſobedience, they *work* not *out their own Salvation*.

When therefore the Scripture tells us that *by Grace we are ſaved*, and yet that at the ſame time we *work out our own Salvation*; 'tis plain that theſe *different Phraſes* are only *different repreſentations* of *one and the ſame thing*, under *different reſpects*: Juſt as *Heigth* and *Depth* are *one and the ſame thing*, conſidered only in *different Poſitions*. Men are ſaved *by Grace*, becauſe without God's gracious Aſſiſtance and Acceptance of their imperfect Endeavours, they could not of themſelves attain unto Salvation; and at the ſame time 'tis no leſs true, that they *work out their own Salvation*, becauſe without their leading a Life of Virtue and Obedience through a diligent Uſe of thoſe means which the Grace of God affords them, the *Grace of God* alone will in no wiſe force them to be ſaved. Thus *God's working in* or *with Us*, and *our working together with God*, are promiſcuouſly expreſſed in Scripture, as Cauſes concurrently producing the ſame Effect. And mens being *hardened*, or *wicked*; *hardened of* God, or *hardening* themſelves, are phraſes uſed in like manner to ſignify one and the ſame thing under different Reſpects. They harden *themſelves*; becauſe 'tis by their own Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs only that they become obdurate. And they are hardened of *God*, not by any proper Act or Efficiency of his, (except perhaps in ſome extraordinary judicial Caſes;) but by his juſtly ceaſing to ſtrive with them any longer, giving them up *unto their own hearts luſts*, (as the Scripture expreſſes it) *letting them follow their own imaginations, and* giving them over *to a reprobate mind, to work all unrighteouſneſs with greedineſs*. Laſtly; 'Tis very remarkable to This purpoſe, that the very *ſame* Acts and Habits, which are known by the Name of *Moral Virtues*, are alſo in Scripture ſtiled *Graces* or *Gifts of the Spirit*: *Moral Virtues*, as they are ſeated in the Mind of Man, directing his Intentions, and appearing in his Practice: And, at the ſame time *Gifts or Fruits of the Spirit*; as they are promoted by the *Arguments of revealed Religion*, by the *Aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God*, and by being *practiſed in expreſs Obedience to the Divine Commands*. *The* Fruit *of the* Spirit, (ſaith St. *Paul*, Eph. v. 9.) *is in all* Goodneſs

and

and Righteouſneſs *and* Truth. And *Gal.* v. 22. *The* Fruit *of the* Spirit, *is Love*, SERM. *Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance; againſt Such, there is No Law.* XXX.

And Now, having *premiſed* a large explication of the *general* Doctrine, upon which the exhortation in the Text is founded; I ſhould in the *next* place have proceeded to conſider *diſtinctly*, the ſeveral *particular* expreſſions made uſe of in the Text: *What* is meant, by *working out our Salvation*; *what* it is, to work it out *with Fear and Trembling*; and *why*, in *That* manner: *What* is meant by God's *giving us both to will and to do, of* his *good pleaſure*; and *how This* conſideration is a Motive to *Us*, to endeavour to *work out* our own *Salvation*. But the diſtinct Conſideration of theſe particulars, muſt be referred to a following opportunity.

SERMON XXXI.

Of the GRACE of GOD.

PHIL. ii. latter part of the 12th, and the 13th Verſe.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.

SERM. XXXI.

IN a foregoing Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I premiſed a large Explication of the *general* Doctrine, upon which the Exhortation in the Text is founded. I ſhall now proceed to conſider *diſtinctly*, the ſeveral *particular* Expreſſions made uſe of in the Text: *What* is meant by *working out our Salvation*; *what* it is, to work it out *with Fear and Trembling*; and *why*, in That manner; *what* is meant by God's *working in us both to will and to do, of* his *good pleaſure*; and *How This* conſideration is a Motive to *Us*, to endeavour to *work out* our own *Salvation*.

I. In the *firſt* place I am to conſider *what* is meant, by *working out our* Salvation. The word, *Salvation*, originally and in its *general* Notion, ſignifies *Deliverance* from any

any great and imminent Danger; eſpecially *ſuch* Deliverance or Eſcape as is accomplished not without labour and hazard. And from hence it comes in Scripture to be applied in the *Spiritual* ſenſe, to ſignify *particularly* and by way of *eminence*, the *Great and Final Deliverance* of virtuous and good men from that *general* Deſtruction, which, in the nature of Things, and by the righteous appointment of God, muſt at laſt overwhelm a wicked and incorrigible world. *The whole World*, ſaith St. *John lieth in Wickedneſs*, or, as the Original has it, *under the Power of the wicked One*, 1. ep. v. 19; that is, The greater part of Mankind, through their eaſineſs in yielding to the Temptations of Unrighteouſneſs, their negligence in not correcting the Corruptions of their Nature, and their Perverſneſs in chuſing wilfully the Ways of Wickedneſs and Debauchery; are altogether incapable of that State of Happineſs, which is in Scripture ſtiled *The Kingdom of God*. For, what St. *Paul* affirms in the *literal* Senſe, that *Fleſh and Blood*, mortal and corruptible Bodies, *cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*, is in the *ſpiritual* Senſe ſtill more *neceſſarily* true, that *wicked and corrupt* Minds ſhall in no caſe enter therein. *The new Heavens and new Earth*, which *we look for according to his Promiſe*, are ſuch wherein *dwelleth* only *Righteouſneſs*; that is, Meekneſs and Juſtice, Purity and Holineſs, Faithfulneſs and Truth. And therefore our Saviour, ſpeaking of the reſurrection of the Saints unto eternal Life, elegantly ſtiles it *The Reſurrection of the* Juſt, *Luk.* xiv. 14. God is *of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity*; and therefore into the heavenly *Jeruſalem there ſhall in no wiſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination or maketh a Lie:* There ſhall be admitted no Fraud or Violence, no Arbitrarineſs or Injuſtice, nor Debauchery or Impurity whatſoever; but *the Spirits of* Juſt *men* only, *made perfect* by the Practice of *Virtue*, and by the influences of the good *Spirit of God*. Now the Bulk of the wicked and corrupt World, being (in the nature of Things) incapable of inheriting This Kingdom of Righteouſneſs, muſt of neceſſity, not by any Cruel and Severe Decree of God, but of neceſſity in point of Wiſdom and Good Government, they muſt be excluded out of Heaven, and, by the righteous and impartial Sentence of the unerring Judge, be in ſuch a manner, as ſhall be exactly ſuitable to each of their reſpective Demerits, ſent into Deſtruction. *From* which Deſtruction, *They who* (as our Lord expreſſes it,) *ſhall be thought* worthy *to obtain That Life, and the Reſurrection from the Dead*, ſhall be Saved. Not that all *Others* alſo ſhall not equally riſe from the Dead; but that *That only* deſerves to be truly and *emphatically* ſtiled the *Reſurrection from the Dead*, which is a *Reſurrection unto* Life *and Glory*. This Deliverance therefore of all juſt and good men, by the Mercy of God, and through the Interpoſition of Chriſt, from that final Deſtruction which muſt naturally and of neceſſity, under the Government of a Wiſe and Righteous Judge, fall upon a wicked and corrupt World; this, I ſay, is what the Scripture calls *Salvation*. The *Conſequence* of which Salvation is indeed moreover mens being admitted into That incorruptible *Inheritance*, that unſpeakable and never-fading *Happineſs*, which is the Free Gift of God through Chriſt, to Thoſe whom in his unerring Judgment he ſhall think fit to advance beyond their natural and original capacities, to be *Heirs of God*, and *Joint-Heirs with Chriſt*, in his eternal Kingdom of Glory.

But the *Primary* Notion of *Salvation*, according to the *proper* ſignification of the word, is *Deliverance from Deſtruction*. And the *Greatneſs* of this Deliverance is, in the *New Teſtament*, lively repreſented unto us by ſeveral remarkable Types. 'Tis repreſented *firſt*, by the Salvation of *Lot* out of *Sodom*; when God with Fire from Heaven overthrew thoſe wicked Cities, *ſetting them forth for an example*, having deſtroyed them with an irreparable Deſtruction, which St. *Jude* calls *the Vengeance of eternal Fire*, ver. 7. 'Tis repreſented in the *next* place, by the Salvation of the *children of Iſrael* out of *Egypt*; when God overthrew *Pharaoh* and his whole Army in the Sea, but led his own people ſafely through the Sea and through the Wilderneſs, into the promiſed *Canaan*. 'Tis repreſented *again*, by the Salvation of thoſe who eſcaped at the final deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; concerning which our Saviour foretold, *Matt.* xxiv. 40. that *then ſhould two* men *be* together *in the field; the one ſhould be taken, and the other left*; And that *two women ſhould be grinding* together *at the mill; the one ſhould be taken, and the other*

SERM. XXXI.

other left. Laſtly, 'Tis repreſented by the Salvation of *Noah* and his Family in the Ark; when God deſtroyed at once the whole impenitent World with a Deluge of Water. For ſo St. *Peter* expreſly applies the ſimilitude, 1 ep. iii. 20. *The like figure whereunto, even Baptiſm* (ſaith he) *doth alſo Now ſave Us.* Only, leſt by *Baptiſm* any man ſhould be ſo weak as to think he meant the bare outward Form or Ceremony, the mere Name or Profeſſion of a Chriſtian; he adds in the very ſame verſe this moſt important caution, that thereby he underſtands, *not the putting away of the Filth of the Fleſh*, (not *the mere Waſhing* or the *Ceremony* of Baptiſm,) *but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God* in the courſe of a virtuous and a Chriſtian Life.

Now This being the true Notion of the word *Salvation*, the Duty of working out *this Salvation*, which is what we are ſo earneſtly exhorted to in the Text, muſt conſequently ſignify the making uſe of thoſe *Means* which are proper and ſufficient to obtain This *End*: That is, it muſt ſignify the *whole Progreſs* of our Deliverance, by a Life of *Virtue* and true *Religion*, from *the Power and Tyranny of the Devil*, from the *Dominion and Slavery of Sin*, and from the *Puniſhment of Death*.

Men, in the State of Heathen *ignorance and wickedneſs*, being as it were habitually ſubject to a Spirit of Deluſion, of Impiety, and of all kinds of Debauchery, are in Scripture repreſented as being in *Slavery to Satan*; who is therefore ſtiled the *Prince of This World*, and the God *of This World*, the *Prince of the Power of the Air*, the *Spirit that worketh in the children of diſobedience*. From This *Tyranny of the Devil* men are ſaved, by forſaking the *Idolatry of the Nations*, and returning to the *worſhip of the true God of the Univerſe*, as taught in the *Goſpel of Chriſt*: Being *delivered*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *from the Power of Darkneſs, and tranſlated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son*, Col. i. 13.

Likewiſe thoſe, who having embraced the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, yet live unworthy of their Holy Profeſſion by means of *Any Habit of Unrighteouſneſs or Debauchery*, are repreſented in Scripture as being *Slaves to Sin*, and ſtill *in the Snare of the Devil*. The expreſſions of This kind are very frequent and elegant; that ſuch perſons are *Servants of Sin*; that *Sin has the Dominion over them*; that they are *overcome by it*; and *brought in bondage to it*; that they are the *Servants of Corruption*, and the like. And becauſe the Devil is the *Head* of this Corruption, who *Tempts* men into it, and *delights* in it; therefore, whoſoever lives in Sin, notwithſtanding his profeſſing himſelf a *Diſciple of Chriſt*, is ſtill in reality *the Servant of Satan*: 1 Joh. iii. 8. *He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil; for the Devil ſinneth from the Beginning.* Whoſoever is ſo falſe to himſelf, as not to be able to reſiſt the Temptations of Unrighteouſneſs, imitates, and is ſubject to, the Great Enemy of God and Goodneſs; is *in the Snare of the Devil, and taken captive by him at his Will.* Now the Deſign of Chriſt's coming into the World was to *deſtroy theſe works of the Devil*; to ſave *men from their Sins*, Matt. i. 21. to *perſuade* them, and to *enable* them, to ſave *themſelves from* amongſt a wicked and *corrupt generation*; *to deliver them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious Liberty of the children of God. Working out our own Salvation* therefore, (conſidered as an Exhortation given to ſuch as are already Chriſtians,) ſignifies *making a* diligent uſe of the Means and Encouragements which God has afforded us in the Goſpel, to aſſiſt and enable us *effectually to reform every evil Habit*, and to improve in the Practice of every Virtue, *perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God.* The *Conſequence* of which *Salvation from* Sin, is *Salvation alſo from the* Puniſhment which God has denounced againſt Sinners. And not only ſo, but upon them who *ſhall be thought worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man*, ſhall be conferred moreover God's free Gift of Eternal Life and Happineſs.

The Exhortation therefore in the Text, to *work out our own Salvation*, is of the ſame import with That of St. *Peter*, 2 ep. i. 10. *Brethren, give diligence to make your Calling and Election ſure; for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall: for ſo an Entrance ſhall be miniſtred unto you abundantly into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* From which Admonition of St. *Peter*, compared with This in the Text, it follows plainly and undeniably, that Men (by God's Aſſiſtance)

Assistance) have a *Power*, as well as an *Obligation*, to *work out their own Salvation*; and that their *election*, that is, their being *chosen* and *approved* of God, depends upon That *diligence* and *sincere endeavour* of their *own*, which the Apostle expressly exhorts them to make use of to this purpose, that thereby they may *secure* their being *elected* of *God*.

II. I am to consider in the *second* place, what is meant by working out our Salvation *with Fear and Trembling*; and *why* it must be done in That manner.

Now the words *Fear and Trembling*, are not put here to express a *Passion*, but to denote *Care and Diligence* in our *Actions*, in opposition to *Presumption*, *Remissness*, or *negligent Confidence*. According to those *other* Admonitions in Scripture; *be not high-minded, but fear*; and, *let him that* thinketh *he standeth, take heed lest he fall*. The wise man observes Prov. xxviii. 14. *Happy is the man that* feareth, that is, who is cautious, *always*; *but he that* hardeneth *his Heart*, that is, who is careless and negligent, *shall fall into Mischief*. And, *To this man will I look*, saith God himself by the Prophet, Is. lxvi. 2. *even to Him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word*. St. *Paul*, though so eminent an Apostle, yet speaks thus concerning his *own Practice* upon this Head: *I keep under my Body*, says he, *and bring it into subjection*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *lest by any means, when I have preached to Others, I my self should become a cast-away*. And *Phil.* iii. 11. *If by any* means, says he, *I might attain unto the Resurrection of the dead; Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect;* —— *But this One thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the Mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*.

The *Reasons why* we are exhorted to work out our Salvation after this manner, with *Fear and Trembling*; that is, with *Caution and Diligence*, with *Care and Earnest Application*; are,

1*st*, Because 'tis of *all* others the thing of the *greatest importance* to us. 'Tis the *One thing necessary*; the Preservation of *ourselves*, of our *Souls*, of our *Life*, of our *Happiness for ever*. What *Naaman*'s Servant said to his Master upon *another* occasion, is *much more* applicable *here*; *My Father, if he had bid thee do some* Great *thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, wash and be clean? Skin for Skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his* Life; for the preservation of this *short*, this *transitory* life: *What* then *shall he give in Exchange for his Soul*, in Exchange for his portion in *Eternity*? If therefore no wise Man, according to our Saviour's Argument in the Parable, attempts to *build a Tower*, without *first sitting down and counting the Cost* of it; how much more does it behove every reasonable person to be sollicitous before all things, that he be well assured in his *own* Understanding, and not by mere hap-hazard rely blindly upon *Others*, in order to find *which* is the True Way of *Salvation*; and that he be accordingly *diligent*, in walking in That Way!

2*dly*, Another reason why we are required to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is because of the *Difficulties* we must expect to meet with in the Work. *Difficulties*, not in the Nature of the *thing it self*: For Christ's *Yoke is easy, and his Burden light*. *Virtue* is of all things *the most natural and the most reasonable*; and the *Commandments of God*, in themselves *no way grievous*. *But great Difficulties* often arise by the perverse opposition of *wicked men* from *without*, and the corrupt inclination of *unreasonable and ungoverned Appetites* from *within*. Insomuch that even *the righteous*, saith St. *Peter*, *scarcely are saved*: And St. *Paul* speaks of Men being *saved, so as by fire*; that is, escaping with difficulty, as out of a House which is in Flames: *saved with Fear, pulled out of the Fire*, so St. *Jude* expresses it, *ver.* 23. The *Flesh* lusteth against the Spirit; warring against the reason and law of our Minds; so that we cannot, without some Pains and Care, do the things that are most reasonable. And when we have perfectly conquered *ourselves*; yet still, through the Difficulties brought upon us by *Others*, by the *Profane Persecutor*, or the *Superstitious Bigot*; by the Blenders of *human* Authority with *Divine*; and those who mingle and confound together the *Powers of* This World and the *Doctrines of* Men, with the *Commands of* God; by

SERM. XXXI.

These is the *Gate* often made *ſtrait*, and the *Way narrow*, ſo that through *tribulation only* can we poſſibly *enter into the Kingdom of God*.

3*dly*, A *third* reaſon, why we are directed to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is, becauſe it is a Work that can be done but *Once*; and if we *Once* miſcarry, we have loſt ourſelves for ever. *It is appointed for Men* Once *to die, and after That, the Judgment*: And *when* Once *the maſter of the Houſe is riſen up and hath ſhut to the door*, there is no more Admiſſion. This Argument is repreſented to us under a very elegant Similitude by one of the moſt *antient* Writers next to the Apoſtles times: *As a Potter*, ſays he, *while the Clay is moiſt and ſoft, moulds it over and over again, if it pleaſes him not at firſt; but after it has been once hardened in the Fire, its ſhape can be mended no more: So in the preſent life, God affords Men from time to time Space and Means of Repentance; but after Death and Judgment has once paſſed upon them, and they be caſt into the Fire, there is no more Remedy for ever.*

4*thly*, We are exhorted to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, and to be *perpetually* upon our *guard*, becauſe we are *continually* in danger of *New Temptations*, and *at* no *time ſecure* from their Aſſaults. Temptations of one ſort or other, perpetually ſurround us; and the Negligent, or Preſumptuous, cannot fail of being frequently betrayed into Sin. From hence are thoſe repeated Admonitions of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, to *watch* and to be *ready always*, to *ſtand faſt in the Faith*, to *quit ourſelves like men*, to *be ſtrong*, to *be ſober* and *vigilant*, to *take heed leſt there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief*; and to *exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt, a promiſe being left us of entring into his Reſt, any of us ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it.*

Laſtly: Another reaſon why we are required to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is, becauſe whatever progreſs in Virtue we have already made, yet if hereafter we fall back into unrighteous Practices, we loſe our reward. *The Juſt*, ſaith God, *ſhall live by Faith; but if any Man draws back, my Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him*: For *no Man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God.* As in a *Race*, All run, but he only that perſeveres, obtains the Prize; and in a *warfare*, All fight, but he only that overcomes gains the Crown of Victory; ſo, in the *ſpiritual* Combat, *he that endures to the End*, ſaith our Lord, *the ſame ſhall be ſaved.* For to them who by *patient Continuance* in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, to *Them* only is made the Promiſe of eternal Life. Wherefore, as St. *Paul* admoniſhes, *we ought to give the more earneſt Heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip*, Heb. ii. 1.

III. The *Third* thing I propoſed to conſider in the Text, was, *what* is meant by God's *working in us both to will and to do of* his *good pleaſure.* Now the plain and full meaning of This, is;

1*ſt*, That *God* is to us the only *Author* of all thoſe *Powers and Faculties*, which we vulgarly call *Natural. In Him we Live, Move, and have our Being.* From *Him* we are indued with *Reaſon and Underſtanding*, with the *Faculty of diſcerning between Good and Evil*, with the *Power* of *Willing and Chooſing what is Right.* We are not *ſufficient of ourſelves to* think *any thing as of ourſelves; but our Sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Weak therefore is That diſtinction ſo often found in the Writings of Divines, between *Nature* and *Grace*; as if *One* was not equally the Gift of God, as the *Other*.

2*dly*, God's giving us *both to will and to do*, ſignifies his affording us moreover *Supernatural* Helps. Such is, the *Revelation of the Goſpel*; which is therefore frequently in Scripture called, *The Grace of God*; Tit. ii. 11. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men.* Col. i. 6.

Under which *general* Grace, are included more *particularly*, the following Supernatural Helps. A *clear and diſtinct Knowledge of our Duty*, more diſtinct than could be diſcovered by the Light of Nature alone. A more plain and expreſs *bringing of Life and Immortality to Light*, by the particular Revelation of a *judgment to come. Exceeding Great and precious Promiſes*; by the Faith and expectation of which, we are enabled to *overcome the World*, to *quench all the Fiery darts of the Devil*, and to become *partakers of the Divine Nature* by perfecting Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. An *Aſſurance of the Forgiveneſs of paſt Sins upon Repentance*; which is what the Scripture emphatically calls *Grace*; *The* Law *came*

by

by Moſes, but Grace *and Truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* The *Aſſiſtance of the Divine* SERM. *Spirit* in the *conſtant and ordinary* practice of our Duty; by which we are XXXI. *renewed, juſtified, ſanctified,* and have *the Love of God ſhed abroad in our Hearts.* Not that the Spirit of God acts upon us by way of neceſſary *compulſion,* forcibly and irreſiſtibly; (for the exhortations given us, not to *quench* and *grieve* and drive him from us, evidently ſhow the contrary;) But he *helps our Infirmities,* in the way of *Moral Aſſiſtance, Perſwaſion, Direction* and *Concurrence*; but *will not always ſtrive with men* who obſtinately reſiſt his good Motions. *Wiſd.* i. 4. *Into a malicious Soul Wiſdom ſhall not enter, nor dwell in the body that is ſubject unto Sin; For the Holy Spirit of Diſcipline will flee deceit, and remove from Thoughts that are without Underſtanding, and will not abide when unrighteouſneſs cometh in.*

Laſtly, Under *Extraordinary Trials,* the Goſpel aſſures us of ſtill more *particular and extraordinary Supports:* that God *will never leave us, nor forſake us*; but *will with the Temptation* always *make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it*; and particularly, that in time of great Perſecution, *it ſhall be given us in that ſame Hour what we ſhall ſpeak* and *what we ſhall do.*

Theſe are, over and above our *natural* Powers and Faculties, the *Supernatural* Helps and Aſſiſtances afforded us by the Goſpel: *Both* of which are included in the Aſſertion in the Text, that *'tis God which worketh in us both to will and to do.*

The *laſt* words added in the Text, ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας, *of his good pleaſure,* do not ſignify, as *Some* have imagined, that God works all theſe things *arbitrarily,* without any regard to the Diſpoſitions and Qualifications of Men. But the True meaning of the words is, that he does all theſe things *through his* Goodneſs; That is the Senſe, of the word which we render *good pleaſure.* 'Tis God's *Goodneſs* which moves him to *work in us both to will and to do*; to give us both the *Faculties of Nature,* and the *Supernatural Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel,* to lead us unto Life and Happineſs.

IV. The *Fourth* and *Laſt* thing I propoſed from the Text, was, to ſhow *How* This conſideration of God's *working in us both to will and to do,* is an Argument or Motive to *Us* to *work out our* own *Salvation. Work out your* own *Salvation,* For *it is* God *that worketh in you both to Will and to Do of his good pleaſure.* The Meaning plainly is; not, that *God* does *All* for us; For then the *Contrary* conſequence muſt needs have been true, that we could do *nothing* for *ourſelves*: But *God,* of his great Goodneſs gives us *Power*; therefore *We may* and *ought* to *Act.* And we may depend alſo, that if we be ſincere in the Uſe of the Powers he has given us, our Endeavours ſhall not be in vain. For, *Greater is He that is in Us, than He that is in the World*; and *if God be for us, who can be againſt Us?* The Exhortation therefore in the Text, is of the ſame Import with that in *Eph.* vi. 10. *Finally, my Brethren, be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the Power of* his *might.*

The *Inferences* proper to be drawn from the whole of what has been ſaid, are:

1. From hence we may obſerve, how little Foundation there is in Scripture for thoſe Men's Opinion, who underſtanding figurative Expreſſions literally and abſurdly, contend that wicked Men have no Power to do any thing towards their own Converſion; and conſequently aſcribe the Cauſe of Men's Impenitency, to *God*'s not giving them (as they call it) the *Grace to repent.* Which is a very great Abuſe of a Scripture-expreſſion. For, God's *giving* or *granting* Men *Repentance,* ſignifies (in Scripture) his granting them the Favour to have their Repentance *accepted* to the Forgiveneſs of paſt Sins, or *allowed* inſtead of Innocence; and not his *conferring* Repentance upon them, as an external Donation: Which is altogether unintelligible. Nor is it leſs abſurd, from thoſe paſſages where very bad Men are ſaid to be dead in *treſpaſſes and ſins*; and that when they amend, *God* creates *in them a new Heart*; to conclude literally, that wicked Men have no more Power to *amend their manners* than to *raiſe themſelves from the dead,* or to *create themſelves anew.* Which Doctrine, muſt of neceſſity make Men very *ſlothful* Servants.

2*dly,* The *ſecond* Uſe proper to be made of the explication now given of the words of the Text, is to Exhort Men to be *diligent* in working out their own Salvation by the Uſe of thoſe Means which God has worked or implanted in them. Which exhortation cannot be better expreſſed, than in the words of the Author

of

SERM. XXXI.

of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. i. 12. *Seek not Death in the Error of your life; and pull not upon yourſelves deſtruction with the works of your own hand. For God made not Death, neither has he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the living. But ungodly Men with their works and words called it unto them.* And Eccluſ. xv. 12. *Say not thou, the Lord has cauſed me to err; for he hath no need of the ſinful man. The Lord hateth all abomination; and they that fear God, love it not. He himſelf made Men from the beginning, and left them in the hands of his counſel; if thou wilt, to keep the Commandments, and to perform acceptable Faithfulneſs. He hath ſet fire and water before thee; ſtretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt. Before man is Life and Death; and whether him liketh ſhall be given him. For the Wiſdom of the Lord is great; and he is mighty in Power, and beholdeth all things. And his Eyes are upon them that fear him, and he knoweth every work of Man. He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither has he given any man licence to ſin.*

SERMON

SERMON XXXII.

Of the KINGDOM of GOD.

MATT. vi. 10.

Thy Kingdom come.

THOUGH *every Chriſtian* acknowledges this Prayer of our Lord's compoſing to be a complete Pattern and Direction, as to the *Subject-Matter* of the things we are to pray for; yet Many, very Many, 'tis to be feared, perpetually repeat the *Words*, with very little Attention to the *Senſe* expreſſed by them: Not conſidering, that All Devotion conſiſts entirely in the Application of the *Mind* to God with an *Underſtanding* of what it deſires; and not at all in the mere repeating with the *Lips* certain cuſtomary *Forms of Words*. SERM. XXXII.

Our Lord in the *former* part of this Prayer, after having taught us that the True and Proper Object of Worſhip, to whom our Petitions ought conſtantly (through *His* Mediation) to be directed, is *the Father which is* in Heaven; (that is, *the Moſt* High; he who, not in *Place or Situation*, but in

SERM. XXXII.

Dignity and Dominion, is *Supreme over All*:) Our Lord, I ſay, in the *former* part of this Prayer, after directing us to the True Object of Worſhip, our *Heavenly Father*, inſtructs us to pray in the *firſt* place for Bleſſings *ſpiritual and eternal*; and then, in the *following* part of the Prayer, to ask for the *Comforts and Neceſſaries* of this *preſent Life*. In the *former* part, among the Petitions for Bleſſings of a *Spiritual* nature, and one of the *Principal* of Thoſe Petitions are the *Words of the Text*: Words of a very large and extenſive ſignification; comprehending in brief almoſt the *Whole Notion* of True Religion; and, therefore, *particularly* worthy to be the Subject of our Meditations: *Thy Kingdom come.*

GOD is *by Nature King* over All; and his *Kingdom* is the *Univerſe*. His *Dominion* is infinite and everlaſting, his *Power* abſolute and irreſiſtible, his *Glory* inexpreſſible and inconceivable. *Of him, and Through him, and To him, are all things*, Rom. xi. 36. That is, *For* his *Pleaſure* all things were *created*; *By* his *Providence*, all things are *preſerved*; *To* his *Glory*, all things *terminate*. The *Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his Handy-work*. The whole Frame of Nature obeys his Commands; and all the Powers of the Univerſe depend entirely upon the Word of his Mouth.

But becauſe the True Greatneſs and Dignity of a Governour conſiſts chiefly in the Obedience of them that can *diſobey*: Becauſe 'tis more *excellent* to be obeyed by *Reaſon and Underſtanding*, by *Will and Choice*, than by mere *neceſſity of Nature*: Becauſe 'tis more *noble* to govern *Free Agents* by *moral conſiderations*, by the *Knowledge* of what is intrinſically *Good or Evil*, by a *Senſe* of the Excellency of *Truth and Virtue*, by the *Wiſdom* of reaſonable and uſeful *Laws*, and by the *Views* of proper *Rewards and Puniſhments*, than to have *Power* over infinite Syſtems of *inanimate Matter*, which has no Senſe of the Regularity of his own Motions, nor capacity to perceive the Wiſdom and Glory of its Creator: Therefore the *Kingdom of* God *principally* conſiſts, in his Government of *reaſonable and intelligent* Creatures; in his being *ſerved and obeyed* by thoſe, who at the ſame time are capable of *diſobeying*; who by their own *Actions* ſet forth his Glory, and not merely in their being *Acted upon* by *Him*; who in their ſeveral Stations and Degrees, according to the Light that is afforded them, *diſcern* what is *Right*, and *approve* what is *Good*, and *act* by their *Free Power*, and are *conſcious of* the Excellency of *Virtue*, and *Love* him whom they Obey, and are made *Happy* by the Participation of his Perfections. This is That, wherein *principally* conſiſts the *Kingdom of God*: A Kingdom, wherein ſhines forth the *Goodneſs*, and *Juſtice*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Holineſs*, of the Supreme Governour, as clearly as his *Power and Dominion* does in his ruling the whole material Univerſe.

By *Sin*, This Kingdom of God, This his Government over the *Hearts* and *Wills* of the rational part of the Creation, is *oppoſed* and *withſtood*. For his *natural Kingdom*, the Kingdom of his *Power*, *cannot* be reſiſted. In *This* reſpect, the whole World is in his Hand as a Duſt of the Ballance; He can withdraw from all things their very *Being* it ſelf, and, with a Blaſt of his mouth, whenever he pleaſes, reduce them all into Nothing in a Moment. So that 'tis a very *abſurd* Notion, which ſome have entertained, from certain figurative expreſſions of Scripture very much miſunderſtood; as if the Devil had attempted to oppoſe the Almighty with *Force*, and had contended with him for the *Dominion of the Univerſe*. No: Such repreſentations as Theſe are only the Fictions of Poets. But indeed the *Devil rebelled* againſt God, in the ſame Senſe wherein *wicked* men *rebel* againſt him. Not by thinking to reſiſt his *Power*, but by preſumptuouſly venturing to diſobey his *Will*, in thoſe things wherein the Nature of Virtue and Vice, and the very Eſſence of Moral Government, neceſſarily requires that they ſhould not be over-ruled and compelled by Force. For here, the Thing that God requires is the *Free Conſent of the Will*; which, in the nature of things is not ſubject to Compulſion; *Obedience itſelf* being *No obedience*, where there was no poſſibility of having *diſobeyed*. By *Sin* therefore this *Moral Kingdom*

of

of God began to be oppoſed; by the *Sins* of *Evil Angels*, and by the *Sins* of *Wicked men*: Among whom, as they corrupted themſelves by degrees, in departing from the Living God; the Devil ſet up a Kingdom of Idolatry and great Wickedneſs, in oppoſition to the Righteous Kingdom of God. In order to *deſtroy* which *Works of the Devil*; (to *deſtroy* them, not by the exerciſe of *Omnipotence*, but by the eſtabliſhment of *Virtue and True Religion*, which is the *Proper* and the Only *proper* Deſtruction of Immorality and Vice;) God was pleaſed to give aſſiſtance and ſtrength to the Light of Nature and Reaſon, by making Revelations of himſelf from time to time to the degenerate world, and of the true manner of worſhipping him; firſt by the *Patriarchs* whom he appointed to be *Preachers of Righteouſneſs* both before and after the Flood; and then by *Moſes* and the *Prophets*; and at laſt by his *Own Son*; who came into the World, and was *manifeſted* (as St. *John* aſſures us) *for* This *Cauſe that he might deſtroy the Works of the Devil*; that is, that he might root out Idolatry and Superſtitious Worſhip, and reform men from Debauchery and all unrighteous Practices; that by the Knowledge, Worſhip, and Love of the One True God and Maker of all things, in Purity and Holineſs of Life, in Juſtice, Meekneſs, and univerſal Charity and Good-will towards each Other, he might bring them back from a ſtate of general Corruption, to become Worthy and Obedient Subjects of his Father's Kingdom of Righteouſneſs. SERM. XXXII.

For This reaſon, the *State* of the *Goſpel*, the *Religion of Chriſt*, the *Obedience* of *Faith*, is in Scripture perpetually ſtiled the *Kingdom of God*: That Kingdom of God, which we are commanded to *ſeek* in the *righteouſneſs thereof*: That Kingdom, which our Saviour told the *Jews*, when he began to preach, was Then *come unto them*: Which he elſewhere declared to the *Phariſees*, *cometh not with obſervation*; *neither ſhall they ſay*, *Lo here*, *or lo there*; *for behold*, *the Kingdom of God is* within *you*: Which, he aſſured his Diſciples, *whoſoever did not receive* with the Meekneſs and Inoffenſiveneſs of *a little child*, *ſhould not enter thereinto* at all: and which, he threatens, in caſe of mens unworthineſs, ſhould be *taken from* One Nation, and *given to Another* that would *bring forth the Fruits thereof*: That Kingdom, which in his *Parables*, our Lord repreſents under *various ſimilitudes* of a *moral* ſignification; ſetting forth, by apt and proper Compariſons, its different States in the preſent World; and *out of which*, he tells us, ſhall finally be *gathered All Offences*, *and they which do iniquity*: That Kingdom, which *God Thus* deſcribed of old to *Moſes*, Exod. xix. 6. *Ye ſhall be unto me a* Kingdom *of Prieſts*, *and an holy Nation*: And the *Prophet Thus*. Pſ. xlv. 6. *A Scepter of Righteouſneſs is the Scepter of thy Kingdom*: And the *heavenly Hoſt* in the *Revelation Thus*, ch. xii. 9. 10. *Now is come Salvation and Strength*, *and the* Kingdom *of our God*; for *That old Serpent*——*which deceiveth the whole World*, (that is, the Devil, the Spirit of Error, the Spirit of Idolatry and Debauchery in All Nations,) *was caſt into the Earth*, (that is was thrown down low, and deſtroyed,) *and his Angels were caſt out with him*: Laſtly, That Kingdom, which the *Apoſtle* St. *Paul* tells us, *is not in Word*, *but in Power*; *is not Meat and Drink* (Forms and Ceremonies,) *but Righteouſneſs*, *and Peace*, *and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*.

This, in the *New Teſtament*, is the frequent and uſual acceptation of this Phraſe, *The Kingdom of God*; It ſignifies the *State of the Goſpel*, or the eſtabliſhment of *true Religion* in the World. From which Uſe of the Phraſe in Scripture, we may by the way obſerve, how greatly all ſuch *Enthuſiaſtick* perſons err, who under the Notion of the *Kingdom of God* repreſent to themſelves either the *Saints* exerciſing *Temporal Authority and Dominion* in *This World*, or *God himſelf* influencing the Minds of Men by his *abſolute and irreſiſtible Power*. As to the former Notion, That of the *Saints* exerciſing *Temporal Authority and Dominion* in *This World*; in *This* Senſe, our Saviour has expreſly declared, that his Kingdom is *not* of *This World*; And the True Proſperity of the Church of God, 'tis plain, does not at all conſiſt in the Increaſe

SERM. XXXII.

Increaſe of *Temporal Grandeur*, which tends always to corruption; but in the Increaſe of *True Holineſs and Virtue* only, in the Hearts and Lives of Men. And as to the *Other* Notion, That of *God's* influencing the Minds of Men by his *abſolute and irreſiſtible Power*; *This* alſo is a very erroneous apprehenſion concerning the manner of God's *ruling* over *Moral Agents*: For the True Greatneſs and Glory of a Prince reigning in his Kingdom, is the Willing *Obedience* of his Subjects, not their *Weakneſs and Incapacity of reſiſting him:* And in all things relating to *Religion and Morality*, 'tis not magnifying the Glory and Majeſty of God, to ſuppoſe *Him* acting upon and over-ruling mens *Wills* by his *Power*, but to ſuppoſe *Them* (like *reaſonable* creatures) *chuſing* to obey his Commands by their *Wills*, and *loving* the Practice of *Virtue and Goodneſs*.

This therefore is the *uſual* Meaning of the *Kingdom of God* in Scripture: It denotes the *State of the Goſpel*, or the Prevalency of *True Religion* among Men.

Nevertheleſs, Since, at the Beſt, *all* that can *here* be done in this *imperfect* State towards eſtabliſhing God's Kingdom of Virtue and Righteouſneſs, and conſequently of True Happineſs among his Creatures: Since, I ſay, All that can be done towards theſe great Ends in this preſent *frail and imperfect* State, is *only in order* to a more *complete and perfect State* hereafter, when God ſhall have *put down all Rule and all Authority and Power*; and when *All Enemies*, *Satan*, and *Sin*, and *Death*, ſhall be entirely *deſtroyed*; and his *Saints* ſhall *reign* with him in *Glory* for ever: Therefore to *That future and perfect* State it is, that This phraſe, *The Kingdom of God*, always has *reference*, even when 'tis applied to the *ſtate of the Goſpel Here*: And *That Heavenly State* it is, which *ultimately and properly* is ſtiled *the Kingdom of God*; Wherein the *Righteous ſhall ſhine forth as the Sun*, *in the Kingdom of their Father*; Into which Kingdom, *there ſhall in no caſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever loveth or maketh a Lye*; but they who *overcome*, (that is, they who ſo reſiſt the Temptations of Covetouſneſs, Ambition, and Senſual Pleaſure, as in the midſt of a degenerate and debauched World, to follow Truth, and Right, and Charity, fearing God, and keeping his Commandments;) *Theſe* ſhall *receive the Kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the World*, and (according to the gracious Promiſe of their Father) ſhall inherit it for ever. This *Heavenly State* I ſay, it is, to which That phraſe, *The Kingdom of God*, always has *reference* even when 'tis expreſly applied to *the State of the Goſpel here*. And 'tis with Great Propriety of expreſſion, that *Both* theſe States are, as well *ſeparately* as *jointly* included under this *One* Denomination: They being indeed, not *Two diſtinct* States, but One the *continuation only* of the Other; differing from each other no otherwiſe, than as Seed-time from Harveſt, or as Childhood from the perfection of Man's eſtate: *Virtue*, and *Goodneſs*, and the *Love of God*, and *Obedience* to him at *preſent*, being the *Beginnings of Happineſs here*; and the *Glories of Heaven* hereafter being nothing elſe but the ſame *Virtue*, and *Goodneſs*, and *Love of God*, and *Obedience* to him, completed and made perfect *There*, by an aſſurance of his uninterrupted Favour and Preſence for ever. And This Notion, by the way, ſhows the extreme Folly and Abſurdity of all Thoſe, who (fundamentally erring from the Truth and Nature of Things,) found their *Religion here*, and their *expectations of Happineſs hereafter*, in any thing elſe (whatſoever it be) *diſtinct* from *Virtue*, and *Righteouſneſs*, and *Charity*, and *True Holineſs*; which things are, not only the *Characters* and *Marks* of, but they are themſelves neceſſarily and immutably the *Very Eſſence* of the *Kingdom of God*.

From what has been hitherto ſaid in explication of this phraſe ſo very frequently met with in the *New Teſtament*, it appears therefore, that there are *Three* Senſes, to which the full Notion of the *Kingdom of God* extends. There is his *Kingdom of Nature*, by which he ruleth with irreſiſtible Power, abſolutely over *All:* There is his *Kingdom of Grace* or *Virtue*; by which he reigneth in the *Hearts of Moral Agents*, who obey him *willingly* or of

Free

Free Choice: And there is his *Kingdom of Glory*; wherein he ſhall finally be for ever adored by Thoſe, who, through a Life of Virtue and True Holineſs, ſhall be found *meet to be Partakers of that Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* SERM. XXXII.

And according to theſe *ſeveral* ſenſes of the Phraſe, muſt the Petition in the Text, *Thy Kingdom come*, be in like manner underſtood, to extend to different Significations.

1. In the *firſt* place, as to the Natural *Kingdom of God*; *This* indeed we cannot with *Any Propriety* pray that it *may come*, becauſe, *by Neceſſity of Nature*, it always *is*, and *cannot but be* actually *preſent*. 'Tis *neceſſarily*, from *everlaſting* to *everlaſting*; a Kingdom of abſolute and irreſiſtible Power; without *Limits*, and without *Interruption*; In *all* Places alike, without diſtinction; and that cannot *come* at *one* Time more than at *another*. Nevertheleſs, though the Kingdom of God, in *This* ſenſe, is what we cannot pray *may come*; yet we *may* and *ought* to rejoice in the Thoughts of its being always Preſent: *Pſ.* xcvii. 1. *The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice; let the multitude of the Iſles be glad thereof.* 'Tis matter of great and juſt Satisfaction to reaſonable Minds, to conſider that the Government and Sovereignty of the Univerſe, the Alone Truly abſolute and uncontroulable Power, is in the hands of unerring Wiſdom and of perfect Goodneſs; and that things are not under the uncomfortable Dominion of Blind Chance, or of inexorable and unrelenting Fate. But

2*dly*, That therefore which our Saviour principally directs us to deſire and pray for in This Petition, is the eſtabliſhment of God's Kingdom *of Grace* or *Virtue*. That as his *Kingdom of* Nature ruleth *Always abſolutely* over All *things*, ſo his *Kingdom of* Grace or *Virtue* may *in due Time* be *univerſally* eſtabliſhed over its *proper Subjects*: As his *natural* Power is *abſolute and uncontroulable*, ſo his *ſpiritual* Dominion over the Hearts and Wills of rational Creatures, may *prevail* finally againſt all the Oppoſition of Sin and Satan: As his *Glory* eſſentially is *infinite* and *immutable*; ſo *relatively* alſo, it may in due time be promoted and acknowledged by all reaſonable Creatures. *This* is the *principal* ſenſe of our praying for the *Kingdom of God* to *come*. 'Tis expreſſing our earneſt Deſire that the Goſpel of Chriſt, the true Religion of God, in its native and uncorrupted Simplicity, may ſpread and prevail over the whole Earth, as the *Waters cover the Sea*; and that *all the Kingdoms of the World may become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt*; May *become his Kingdoms*, not by conqueſt of Temporal Power, but by Perſwaſion and Force of Truth, by the Power and Demonſtration of the Spirit. And that all they who *have* embraced the Goſpel in Profeſſion, may *let the Kingdom of God rule in their Hearts*, by *living* as *worthy* Subjects of it. For 'tis in the *willing Subjection* of the Mind to *Truth and Right*, and in the regulating conſequently all *Actions*, *Paſſions*, *Appetites*, *and Affections*, according to the Divine Laws; in *This* it is, that this *Kingdom of God* principally conſiſts. By his *Power* he can *at* all *times* ſubdue all *things* unto himſelf; and by this irreſiſtible Dominion, the whole material unintelligent World is perpetually governed, and obeys it *neceſſarily*, without *any poſſibility of diſobeying*: But tis the *Will of God*, that *Intelligent* and *Rational* Beings ſhould not obey *his* Will, but by *their own*; ſhould not obey by *neceſſity of Nature*, but by the *free Choice and unconſtrained Compliance of* the *Will*. The *material Univerſe* therefore, the whole *Frame of Nature* is ſubject to the Power of God; but reaſonable *Creatures only* are ſubject to his Laws. By this they become *accountable*, and *capable of* being *judged*: By This, they are rendred either *acceptable* to him, and capable of *Reward*; or *obnoxious*, and *liable to* be *puniſhed*. This Trial, This Probation he puts upon them ſuitable to their rational Nature: And 'tis the *Perfection* of their *Nature*, and the *higheſt Improvement of* their *Virtue*, to *chuſe* to obey him *cheerfully and readily*. The more *excellent* the *Nature*, and the more *perfect* the *Virtue* of any *reaſonable Creature* is, the more does it delight in obeying the moſt perfect Will of God, who is *Perfection* and *Goodneſs itſelf*. For this reaſon, the *Angels in Heaven* are ſtiled in Scripture, by way of eminence, *thoſe*

SERM. XXXII.

Servants of His that do his Pleaſure. And our Saviour as it were by way of *explication* of this Petition, *Thy Kingdom come*, directs us to proceed in the following Words, *Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*: And elſewhere ſets before us to the ſame End, *his Own* ſtill *more perfect* Example, *Joh.* iv. 34. *My* Meat *is to do the Will of Him that ſent me, and to finiſh his Work.* But

3*dly* and *Laſtly*, There is ſtill *another* ſenſe of this Petition, which was very much inſiſted on in the Primitive Church: And That is, that God's *Kingdom of* Glory might *come ſpeedily*; and that being *quickly* delivered from the Miſeries of this ſinful and corrupt World, they might *ſoon* attain to That *Bleſſed Hope of* the *Reſurrection from the Dead.* It was an Opinion which *prevailed generally* in thoſe early Ages, that at the Reſurrection every Man ſhould ariſe *in Order* according to the *degree* of his Goodneſs; and that they who were raiſed and judged *firſt*, ſhould *themſelves* have a part in *judging* thoſe which followed. Whether there was *juſt ground* for this opinion, or not, I ſhall not here take upon me to determine: But the *Texts* on which they built it were theſe which follow; 1 *Cor.* xv. 23. *Every man in his own Order; Chriſt, the Firſtfruits; afterward they that are Chriſt's, at his coming: and then cometh the end.* 1 Theſ. iv. 16. *The dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt.* Rev. xx. 6. *Bleſſed and holy is He that has part in the firſt Reſurrection.* 1 Pet. iv. 17. *Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God.* 1 Cor. vi. 2. *Do ye not know that the Saints ſhall judge the World? ——— and that we ſhall judge Angels?* Jude 14. *The Lord cometh with ten thouſand of his Saints to execute Judgment.* Mat. xix. 28. *Jeſus ſaid unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man ſhall ſit in the Throne of his Glory, ye alſo ſhall ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael: and every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my Name's ſake, ſhall receive an hundred-fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting Life*: In St. *Luke* it is, *ſhall receive manifold more in This Preſent time, and, in the World to come, Life everlaſting*, ch. xviii. 30. Laſtly, *Rev.* xx. 4. *I ſaw Thrones, and they ſat upon them, and Judgment was given unto them; and I ſaw the Souls of them that were beheaded for the teſtimony of Jeſus, and for the word of God, and ——— they lived and reigned with Chriſt a thouſand years.* 'Tis remarkable, the Text does not ſay, that *Chriſt* came down and reigned *upon Earth* a thouſand years; as many have imagined without *Any* Ground: But only that the Martyrs *reigned with Chriſt* a thouſand years; *whatever* be the meaning of that Prophetical, and perhaps figurative, period of Time. Theſe are the Texts upon which in the Primitive Times was built That general Opinion, that at the Reſurrection every man ſhould ariſe *in Order* according to the *degree* of his Goodneſs; and which made them therefore in their Prayers petition for an early Reſurrection. Whether there was in the Texts ſufficient foundation for the Opinion in *This particular* or no, (which 'tis not at all needful for *Me* here to determine,) yet *in the general* 'tis certain, that they who lived in ſuch continual State of Perſecution as the Primitive Chriſtians did, and had ſuch a lively Senſe as they always had upon their Minds of the Glory and Happineſs of Heaven, had very good reaſon to pray earneſtly and conſtantly, that the *Kingdom of God* (in this Laſt and moſt perfect Senſe of the phraſe) might ſpeedily *come*; that it would pleaſe God *ſhortly to accompliſh the Number of his Elect, and to haſten his Kingdom:* According to that pathetick concluſion of the book of the *Revelation*, ch. xxii. 20. *He which teſtifieth theſe things, ſaith, Surely, I come quickly: Amen; even ſo come Lord Jeſus.* And though (God be Thanked) *We* are not *Now* under ſuch *continual* and ſuch *ſevere* Perſecution, as the *Primitive and Better* Chriſtians were; yet whoſoever has a juſt ſenſe of the *Vanity* and *Diſorders* of this *preſent* World, and the *Glory* of the World *to come*; whoſoever obſerves what St. *Paul* foretels, 2 *Tim.* iii. 12. *Yea, and* All *that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus* ſhall *ſuffer perſecution*; and conſiders the Difficulties continually ariſing to *upright and ſincere* men in *Every* Station of Life, from the numerous Errors and Corruptions, evil Cuſtoms

toms and debauched Practices, of an *ignorant, superstitious, and tyrannical* World; will see reason to think it *still* and *ever*, a most natural and proper part of the Prayer of every Good Christian, that the *Kingdom of God may come*; even that *New Heaven and New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*. SERM. XXXII.

To which, that we may All at length arrive, *God of his infinite Mercy grant*, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XXXIII.

Of the KINGDOM of GOD.

St. MATT. vi. 33.

But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.

SERM. XXXIII.

OUR Saviour in the 24*th* verſe of this chapter, warns his Diſciples of the abſolute Impoſſibility of their being at the ſame time ſervants of God, and ſlaves to the pleaſures of this preſent corrupt World. *No man*, ſays he, *can ſerve two Maſters*; No man can at one and the ſame time obey two Perſons of a contrary diſpoſition; The Judgment and Affections of his Heart and Soul cannot at once be fixt and ſettled upon things of a different and inconſiſtent nature: *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other.* He muſt of neceſſity, by obeying the one, diſobey and neglect the other; and then, *his* Servant only he is to whom he obeys. *Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon*; ye cannot be truly religious and ſincere ſervants of God, while your Hearts and Affections are too intently

tently and inſeparably fixt upon the vanities of the preſent ſinful World; For in all probability there *will* ſometime or other ariſe a competition between them; and then he that cannot part with thoſe injoyments of the World which are inconſiſtent with his Religion, *muſt* neglect his duty towards God; and he that will upon no Account neglect his Duty towards God, muſt be content to part with all the contrary Intereſts in the preſent World. SERM. XXXIII.

This therefore being the caſe, that we cannot attend wholly to two contrary things at once; and that it cannot be imagined, but that one or the other of them muſt in many circumſtances and upon many occaſions be poſtponed; our Saviour proceeds to adviſe us, *ver.* 25. *which* of the two oppoſite Intereſts 'tis of the greateſt importance for us to ſecure. He admoniſhes us, that our main and principal Intentions ought always to be fixed upon our Chief, that is, our future Happineſs; without being unreaſonably and anxiouſly ſollicitous concerning the tranſitory Injoyments of this preſent life; *Therefore I ſay unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye ſhall put on.* With reſpect to the *Apoſtles*, to whom theſe words were more immediately directed, they are to be underſtood in the *ſtrict* and *literal* Senſe; that being in a perpetual Progreſs from one place to another to preach the Goſpel, they were not to make any proviſion at all for their own maintenance, but to rely entirely upon the Providence of God, by whoſe appointment they were imployed in that ſpiritual work. But as the words expreſs the duty of *Chriſtians at all times and in all places*, they muſt be underſtood in a larger and leſs ſtrict Senſe; to ſignify, that, after we have uſed a reaſonable induſtry to obtain the neceſſaries of this preſent life, we ought not to be any further anxious and ſollicitous about them; but to rely on the Providence of God for a continual ſupply of theſe things by his bleſſings upon our *juſt* Indeavours, and to be content with what proportion of them he is pleaſed to beſtow upon us in the ways of Righteouſneſs.

The Reaſons or Arguments, *why* we ought thus contentedly to rely upon the Providence of God, our Saviour adds in the 25*th* and following verſes: *Is not the Life more than meat, and the Body than raiment?* He that firſt gave you Life and Being, without your contributing any thing towards it yourſelves; will he not much more beſtow upon you, in the ways of Virtue and Integrity, things neceſſary for the ſupport and preſervation of that Life? *Behold the fowls of the Air; for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns*; they foreſee not their own Wants, nor are able to make any proviſion againſt them; *yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye Thought for raiment; Conſider the Lilies of the Field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin; and yet* God gives them a continual increaſe, and clothes them with inimitable Beauty; ſo that *even Solomon himſelf in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of theſe: Wherefore if God ſo clothe the graſs of the Field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith?*

After which Reaſonings he repeats again the admonition itſelf, *ver.* 31. *Therefore take no Thought, ſaying, What ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? (for after theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things*; (Which admonition, if it be applied, not to the then preſent circumſtances of the Apoſtles only, but to all Chriſtians in general; it muſt be underſtood with ſome limitations in the ſenſe before explained;) And then he adds, in the Words of the Text, *But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.*

The *Kingdom of God*, in Scripture-phraſe, ſignifies, ſometimes the Glory and Happineſs of *Heaven*; ſometimes the ſtate of the Goſpel, the eſtabliſhment of the Religion of Chriſt upon *Earth*; and very frequently *Both* of them together; they being in reality one and the ſame thing, differing only in time and in degree. For God carries on one uniform and regular deſign of bringing all his Creatures to Righteouſneſs and Happineſs; and theſe are inſeparable the one from the other. Righteouſneſs is the only poſſible foundation of true Happineſs; and Happineſs is, both in the nature of things and by the appointment of God, the Fruit and the Effect of Righteouſneſs. They differ only as Seed-time and Harveſt, as

SERM. XXXIII.

Childhood and the State of a Man; *Grace or Virtue*, being the beginning, the ground and principle of *Happineſs*, growing up and improving towards the Perfection of *Glory*. The *Kingdom of God* therefore, when it ſignifies *Both*, is not uſed in different Senſes, but in its moſt proper and natural ſignification: On the contrary, when it ſeems reſtrained to *One ſignification*, it is *then rather* taken figuratively, and put only as a Part for the Whole. In the Text, it is of little importance in *which* of the two Senſes we underſtand it: For, if by the *Kingdom of God*, be meant the ſtate of the Goſpel or the Religion of Chriſt here; yet without doubt 'tis principally with regard to its final iſſue and perfection in Heaven: And if thereby be meant the Glory and Happineſs of Heaven, yet this always preſuppoſes the foregoing eſtabliſhment of true Righteouſneſs and Holineſs upon Earth. Or, they may ſeem *Both* to be expreſſed in theſe words of our Saviour, The *Kingdom of God* and *his Righteouſneſs*; the *Glory of Heaven*, and the *Way* that leads to it; the *End* to be ultimately aimed at, and the neceſſary and indiſpenſable *Means* of attaining it.

To *Seek* theſe things, is to value and eſteem them; to fix our Thoughts and Meditations upon them; to propoſe them to ourſelves as the moſt valuable End, towards which all our Actions ought to be directed; to be diligent in inquiring and ſtudying the Means by which they may beſt be attained; and to be as zealous and hearty, as ſincere and ſteddy in our indeavours after them, as the *Gentiles*, i. e. as worldly men, are, in ſeeking after the Pleaſures and Profits, in purſuing the Intereſts and Injoyments of the preſent Life. This is to *ſeek* the *Kingdom of God*, and his *Righteouſneſs*: Uſing our utmoſt Endeavours, imploying all our Powers and Faculties, to promote the Intereſt of true Religion and the Practice of Virtue among Men, which is the beginning of the *Kingdom of God* on *Earth*; in order to ſecure to Ourſelves and Others a portion in that eternal ſtate of Happineſs, which is the final eſtabliſhment of his *Kingdom* in *Heaven*.

Seek ye *firſt*; i. e. ſeek theſe things *before*, and in *preference to* all other things; ſeek them with greater diligence and more earneſt labour, with ſteddier zeal and with a warmer affection, with greater care and deeper concern, with a more conſtant and unwearied application: Seek them as things of greater moment, even of infinite importance; ſo as in competition always to prefer them clearly before all other Intereſts and Deſigns whatſoever: Conſidering that there is no proportion between things finite and infinite, no compariſon between things temporal and eternal: that it will be unſpeakably a greater Happineſs to be judged worthy of the meaneſt portion of that eternal inheritance, where *neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and ſteal*, than to be put in poſſeſſion of all the ſhort-lived empires of this World, and of all thoſe tranſitory Riches, which of themſelves moulder away in few years into that duſt from whence they were originally taken: that 'tis *even here* infinitely a greater pleaſure to *ſave a Soul from Death by converting a Sinner from the Error of his Ways*, than Senſual and Voluptuous Perſons ever find in the higheſt gratifications of Senſe, or worldly minds in the poſſeſſion and injoyment of the largeſt Treaſures.

Seek ye *firſt* the Kingdom of God; *i. e.* not ſo as wholly to exclude the care of other things; For That is impoſſible in this preſent Life, and to pretend to it, is but Enthuſiaſm, and hinders the ſpreading of true Religion: But ſeek *this* chiefly and in the firſt place; Make *this* your principal and main care; Suffer nothing to interfere or come in competition with it: Do this *above* and *before* all other things, and yet other things need not to be left undone. The very Command itſelf of ſeeking this *firſt*, implies that other things alſo may be ſought *afterwards*; that other things likewiſe may be taken care for, in their proper *place* and *ſubordinate* Rank; with a due and moderate degree of affection, ſuch as may always be conſiſtent with this ultimate and great deſign. And with *This Limitation*, if not to the *Apoſtles themſelves*, yet at leaſt ſo far as they can be a general precept to *all Chriſtians at all times*, muſt the Words, (as I before hinted) of neceſſity be underſtood.

The Words being thus explained, we may obſerve in them theſe three things:

I. A *Precept*, or the *Duty* commanded, *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*.

II. The

II. The *manner* and *degree* of the Obligation, *Seek it first.* SERM.
III. The *Promiſes* even of a *temporal Reward* annexed. *And all theſe things ſhall* XXXIII.
be added unto you.

I. There is in the Words a *Precept*, or the *Duty* commanded, *Seek ye the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs.* And here without doubt, there is no Man who with any the leaſt degree of Sincerity calls himſelf by the Name of a Chriſtian, but *profeſſes* and *thinks* that he ſeeks the Kingdom of God. The very title and profeſſion of a Chriſtian, implies as much as his being a Candidate for Heaven; And ſo long as he continues a member of the Church of Chriſt *here*, he is apt to believe that he retains his title, and is going forwards towards his inheritance in the glory that ſhall be revealed *hereafter*; eſpecially if he be conſtant in his outward Profeſſion; if he be zealous for Notions which perhaps he underſtands not, and which tend not much to influence practice; and if he be diligent in attending the external rites and ſervices of Religion. But 'tis obſervable that our Saviour tells us, St. *Luke* xiii. 24. that there are *many* that ſeek *to enter in*, who *ſhall not be able*; and in the expreſſion of the Text itſelf he plainly enough intimates, that Men may *in vain* ſeek the Kingdom of God, if they ſeek it not according to the righteouſneſs thereof. Since therefore there *is* ſuch a thing as *Seeking* without *Effect*; and to fall finally ſhort of what we profeſs to Seek for is at leaſt an equal, perhaps a greater Miſery, than never to have ſought after it at all; it cannot but be a ſubject worthy our moſt ſerious Conſideration, to inquire into the full meaning and extent of this precept of our Saviour; which unqueſtionably is not obeyed in its true Senſe, unleſs we *ſo Seek* as to be able to *Find*. St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* ix. 24. compares the life of a Chriſtian to a *Race*, wherein *they that run, run all, but one receiveth the prize*; and thereupon he exhorts his *Corinthians ſo to run*, that they might *obtain*. In like manner our Saviour in the Text, when he commands us to ſeek the Kingdom of God, and directs us to ſeek it in the way of righteouſneſs, and elſewhere warns us that many who ſeek it ſhall not be able to find it; he cannot but be underſtood as exhorting us to ſeek it earneſtly and effectually and in *ſuch* a manner, as that we may not finally fail to attain it.

For our clearer direction therefore in obeying this precept, 'tis to be obſerved that ſeeking any thing ſincerely and effectually, implies in it the following particulars.

1. Having a juſt *value and true eſteem* for the thing we profeſs to ſeek after. For the deſires and indeavours after any object, muſt of neceſſity always be proportionable, not to the real and intrinſick value of the thing itſelf, but to the degree of the *impreſſion* it makes upon our mind, and of the affection it conſequently excites in it. There are great numbers of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, who though they are afraid indeed of the puniſhment of Hell, and cannot bear the terror of eternal torments; (which makes them therefore not dare to be openly profane;) yet they have no real Eſteem for the ſtate of Heaven, no earneſt deſire after that Happineſs, which conſiſts in the likeneſs of God and in the Perfection of Virtue. To prevent the ill Effects of which Remiſſneſs, the Scripture uſes great variety of Arguments to excite in us a juſt Regard and true Value for the greatneſs of that Happineſs, which God has vouchſafed to prepare for them that love and obey him; repreſenting it to us under the Notion of a *Pearl* of ſuch great price, that that Perſon is ſpoken of as acting very wiſely, who immediately ſold all that he had to purchaſe it; under the ſimilitude of a *Crown* that never fades; of a *Kingdom* that will continue for ever; of a *Prize* which no Labour can be too much in contending for; of a *Glory* ſhining forth as the Sun, as the Brightneſs of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever; of a *Treaſure* that can never waſte, nor be diminiſhed either by violence or fraud; of *fulneſs of joy* without intermiſſion, and *pleaſures* that will laſt for evermore; of *ſeeing the Face* of God, and being made like unto him, and being aſſured of his Love and Favour for ever. And yet all theſe are but figurative Expreſſions, Compariſons, and very imperfect Repreſentations; For, after all that is or can be ſaid, yet *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath entered into the Heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.* In which *One* elegant Image there is contained *much Variety* under a moſt beautiful Gradation. Great is the

Diverſity

SERM. XXXIII.

Diverſity of glorious Objects which entertain the *Eye* in contemplating the beautiful Order and exquiſite proportion of the Works of God; and yet this is far exceeded by the hearing of the Ear, and by the larger compaſs of Other men's obſervations joined with our own. Many are the Glories which the *Ear* hath heard of, in the deſcription of all parts of the World at preſent, and in the Hiſtories of the Ages that have paſt before us; and yet theſe likewiſe are ſtill far excelled, by what the Heart of man is able to conceive, and the Mind can repreſent to itſelf in the Imaginations of the Thoughts. Vaſtly great, and even unlimited are the Glories, which a vigorous and comprehenſive *Imagination* can frame to itſelf as poſſible; and yet even theſe likewiſe (ſays the Apoſtle) are as far excelled by the glory that ſhall be revealed in the *Kingdom of God*, as the Seeing of the Eye is by the Hearing of the Ear, or the Hearing of the Ear by the Imagination of the Heart. But becauſe theſe things after all are in their own nature *ſpiritual*, and can only be *ſpiritually diſcerned*; 'tis ſtill a matter of conſiderable Difficulty, and requires frequent and ſerious Meditation, to poſſeſs our minds with a juſt value and due eſteem of them; which is abſolutely neceſſary, in order to our ſeeking them worthily, and with that earneſtneſs and diligence they deſerve. The Affections muſt be drawn off from vain Imaginations, and the Mind reconciled to the Love of Truth and Goodneſs: We muſt *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*, as our Saviour expreſſes it; or, in the Pſalmiſt's Phraſe, *thirſt after* it, even *as the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks*. Otherwiſe, what wonder is it that men fall ſhort of the Kingdom of God, both here and hereafter; that they attain not to its Righteouſneſs here, and to the Glory of it hereafter; if their Deſires after it be weak, their Indeavours careleſs, and they *ſeek* it as if they ſought it not?

2. Seeking any thing heartily and effectually, implies that we *fix our Attention* continually, *i. e.* habitually upon it. 'Tis not ſufficient that our judgment be convinced of the importance and neceſſity of Religion, unleſs our Paſſions and Affections likewiſe be in ſome meaſure intereſted. Nor is it enough that our Affections be moved once or ſeldom, but our zeal muſt be renew'd by frequent meditation. *We muſt give earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip*, Heb. ii. 1. For, as in matters of Senſe, Objects at a diſtance appear ſmall and imperfect; and nothing but reaſoning and judgment can correct the errors and deceptions of the Sight; ſo in matters of Religion and of ſpiritual concern, nothing but frequent conſideration and earneſt and ſerious meditation can repreſent thoſe things as *preſent* to us, ſo as to cauſe them to make vigorous and laſting impreſſions upon our Minds, which yet we all know *cannot be* very far *diſtant* from Us: For *Death* is not remote from the longeſt Liver in this tranſitory World; and *That* conveys us if not immediately, yet without any farther Change of our State, it conveys us unto Judgment. To prevent our Attention being diverted from theſe things, the Apoſtles are perpetually exhorting us, to raiſe our thoughts from the Vanities of this tranſitory and uncertain World, to the Glories of that Heavenly and eternal Kingdom which we profeſs to ſeek as our ultimate End: to *ſet our affections on things above, not on things in the Earth*. And our Saviour in his Parable of the Sower warns us how the Word of the Kingdom, notwithſtanding the unſpeakable Weight and Importance of it, may yet very poſſibly make no more impreſſion on the Minds of careleſs and inconſiderate Perſons, than Seed caſt upon the hard high-way can enter into the the Earth and grow; or if the Word preached *does* make ſome impreſſion at firſt, yet that it may eaſily be drowned by the Cares and Buſineſs and Pleaſures of a corrupt World, as Corn is choked and over-run, by a multitude of Weeds. And This without queſtion is the true Reaſon, why in ſo great a number of Chriſtians who ſeem in ſpeculation to believe the great doctrines of Religion, and profeſs zealouſly to ſeek the Kingdom of God; yet in reality theſe things have little more influence upon their Lives and Practice, than a Demonſtration of any Truth laid aſide and neglected after it has once been underſtood; or than a paſſage of a Hiſtory, forgotten after it has been once read; than a Dream, when one awaketh; or than a paſt Thought that is never recollected. This ſort of Perſons, are excellently deſcribed by *Ezekiel*, ch. xxxiii. 31. *They come unto thee, as my people cometh, and they ſit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them*;

them; for with their mouth they ſhew much love, but their heart goeth after their Covetouſneſs. And lo, thou art to them as a very lovely ſong, of one that has a pleaſant voice, and can play well on an inſtrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not. SERM. XXXIII.

3. Seeking any thing heartily and effectually, implies, that we be *diligent and impartial in inquiring after the beſt and moſt certain means of attaining it.* He that in earneſt ſeeks the Kingdom of God, muſt not be bent upon chooſing his own ways, and doing his own pleaſure, upon gratifying his own inclinations and indulging his own Paſſions; but on the contrary muſt reſolve to ſubmit entirely to the Will of God, to embrace Truth where-ever he finds it, and to be always ſincere in the Search after it. *Truſt in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not to thine own Underſtanding*, Prov. iii. 5. Zeal without Knowledge, Heat in the Paſſions without Light in the Underſtanding, is like travelling in a wrong road; which the faſter a man goes, and the further he proceeds in it, the farther he is from his journey's End, and with the greater difficulty will he return into the Way that truly leads to it. The firſt Diſpoſition neceſſary in him that with Effect would *ſeek* the Kingdom of God, is, that with a meek and unprejudiced Mind he conſider and ſtudy the *Means* by which God has directed him to obtain it, and with ſimplicity and purity of Intention receive the *ingrafted Word, which is able to ſave his Soul:* following the Example of Holy *David*, whoſe ſtudy all the day long was in the Law of God, and in the night-ſeaſon alſo he meditated on the ſame. For Want of this deſire of true inſtruction it is, that ſo many blind Superſtitions, ſo many abſurd unintelligible Doctrines, and ſo many unreaſonable Practices, have in ſeveral Ages of the World crept in under pretence and in the room of Religion; making void the plaineſt Reaſon of things and the moſt expreſs Commandment of God, through the Corruptions and Diſputes of Men; and fulfilling that Prophecy of our Saviour, that many ſhould *ſeek to enter in*, (ſeeking in vain and wrong ways, in ways of their own inventing and agreeable to their own corrupt affections,) many ſhould in this manner *ſeek* to enter in, *and ſhould not be able.* The only ſafe, certain, and general direction, by which perſons of all capacities may guide themſelves in this matter, in the midſt of a divided and contentious World, is to adhere ſtedfaſtly to the *two great Rules* which God has given us to walk by; *viz.* never allowing our ſelves in any Action contrary to our *Reaſon* and Conſcience, which (as the Wiſe man elegantly expreſſes it) is the *Candle of the Lord*; or contrary to *Scripture*, which is the brighter and clearer Light of Revelation. And herein we muſt firſt take care, not to fail in the *foundation*; in thoſe *plain* and *certain* things, wherein no man can innocently miſtake, but *he that runs may read them*; in thoſe great commandments, thoſe weightier matters of the Law, the Love of God and of our Neighbour: and then we may with more ſafety proceed to conſider the *Superſtructure*, of doctrines *more* ſpeculative and *leſs* certain, of rites *more* difficult and of *leſs* importance. But for any man who is profane and a blaſphemer of the Name of God, who is unjuſt and unrighteous towards his Neighbour, or who lives in the Habitual Practice of Intemperance and Debauchery; for ſuch an One to pretend to *ſeek* zealouſly the Kingdom of God, in matters of external form, or in contending for Laws and Doctrines of Men, is like labouring to ſet in order the garments upon a *dead* Body; or like watering a Plant, whoſe very roots are dead. 'Tis contending about the *Name* of Religion, where the *Thing* is not; and for the *Shadow*, where there is no *Subſtance.* And here comes in that great and never-failing Rule of our Saviour, *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them.* Whoever is more concerned for particular Forms and Ceremonies, for Doctrines of a Sect or Party, for Dominion over other men's Conſciences, for any thing that depends on temporal Authority, than for the Diſcovery of Truth and the Practice of Virtue; very ſure we may be, that That Man's religion is Vain.

4*thly* and *laſtly*, Seeking any thing heartily, ſincerely, and effectually, implies, that we immediately *Practiſe and put in Execution*, what we are once ſatisfied is the true Means to obtain it. Reſting in the ſpeculative part of Religion is as if a man ſhould hope to arrive at his journey's end, merely by inſtructing himſelf in the knowledge of the Way. No: He that in earneſt *ſeeks the Kingdom of God* muſt not only know and underſtand, but muſt in the courſe of his Life put in *Practice* alſo the *Righteouſneſs thereof.* *Though I ſpeak* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *with the*

SERM. XXXIII.

Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal: and though I have the gift of Prophecy and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing. The *Phariſees* underſtood, the *Scribes* diſputed well about the Law; and *many* at the day of judgment ſhall ſay; *Lord, have we not taught in thy ſtreets, and in thy name done many wonderful works*; and yet he will ſay unto them, *I know you not; depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity:* For, not he that *knows*, but he only that *does* righteouſneſs, *is righteous*. And this is evidently the Work; not of a few hours, but of a whole life: So that they who put off their Repentance to their Death-bed, far from ſeeking *firſt*, do plainly ſeek only in the *laſt* place *the Kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs*: *i. e.* they are the greateſt neglecters and deſpiſers of it: And conſequently they ſhall be leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven; *i. e.* in Scripture-Phraſe, far ſhall they be from ever arriving there. Which brings me to the IId thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, *viz.* the *manner and degree* of the Obligation; *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.*

SERMON

SERMON XXXIV.

Of the KINGDOM of GOD.

MATT. vi. 33.

But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.

THIS a very lively and affecting deſcription of Providence, which our Saviour gives us in his excellent diſcourſe to his Diſciples in this chapter: That our *heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him*; and is at all times able and willing to ſupply us with what his infinite Wiſdom knows to be needful and convenient for us; that not only *men* who are endued with reaſon and forecaſt, and have the Advantage of their own labour and induſtry; but even the *Ravens* and *Fowls of the Air, which neither ſow nor reap, which neither have ſtorehouſe nor barn*, have yet a plentiful proviſion made for them, and are continually fed by his bountiful Providence: Yet not a *Sparrow*, one of the meaneſt of Birds, *falls to the ground without* him, *i. e.* without his direction or permiſſion; *not one of them*, as St. *Luke* expreſſes it, *is for-*

SERM. XXXIV.

forgotten before God: That not only Creatures endued with Life and Senſe, but ſtill further, even the *Graſs* and Flowers of the Field, which can contribute nothing towards their own ſupport, nor are at all ſenſible of what is done for them, have yet in them more and greater marks of the inimitable workmanſhip of the great Creator of all things, than ever the Courts of the greateſt Princes, even that of *Solomon* himſelf, had of human artifice and earthly glory: Nay, further, that even things of a ſtill lower degree than either Plants or Animals, thoſe very things which of all others ſeem to us the leaſt valuable and leaſt to be regarded, even theſe are not beneath the care and inſpection of Providence, but the very *hairs of our head are all numbred* before God.

The Uſe our Saviour makes of this lively Deſcription of Providence, is to teach us to rely at all times upon the Care and Protection of God, without unreaſonable anxiety, diffidence, and diſtruſt. And indeed, were not the noble Subject careleſly and inconſiderately paſſed over in mens thoughts, without attention and ſerious meditation, or were there not ſecretly in the breaſts of men *an evil Heart of Unbelief*, it is not poſſible but this excellent Argument would generally produce in the Minds and Lives of men its juſt and natural effect. Men who ſtudy and contemplate the *Phænomena* of *Nature*, which are the Works of God, the further they carry their inquiries, and the deeper diſcoveries they make, the More, and the more undeniable Evidences they perpetually find, that the Works of Nature are not the Blunders of Chance, or the blind Effect of unintelligent Fate; but the continual Operations of God who governs all things, by the uninterrupted care and interpoſition of an All-wiſe Providence which *neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps*, and from whoſe direction nothing is exempted at any time or in any place. Chriſtians, who according to their Profeſſion, believe the *Scriptures*, find our Saviour in the paſſages now recited, declaring fully and in few words this great Truth, confirming it by his Divine Authority to thoſe who have not capacities or opportunities of obſerving it in the nature of the things themſelves; and making infinitely a better improvement of it, to cauſe us to put our Truſt worthily in God who governs all things, than ever was made by any of the Philoſophers in any Age of the World: *If God*, ſaith he, *ſo feeds the Birds of the Air, and clothes the Graſs of the Field; how much more will he take* care of *you, O ye of little Faith*?

But our Saviour's Argument does not end here: The conſideration of the Care of Providence over us teaches us to truſt in God for a ſupply of all things neceſſary *here*; and This our Truſt in him for things neceſſary *here*, is in order to enable us with greater earneſtneſs and leſs diſtraction of Thought, to attend upon the one thing neceſſary, the ſecuring our portion in the eternal Happineſs of the Kingdom of God *hereafter*: That our Hearts being weaned from an over-fond Love and Affection for the tranſitory enjoyments of this preſent World, may be *there* more ſurely and ſteddily fixed, where is laid up our true and laſting treaſure; even *that treaſure in the Heavens that faileth not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupteth. Take no thought therefore*, ſays our Lord; *i. e.* be not eager and ſollicitous, anxiouſly and unreaſonably careful, for theſe things which the *Nations of the World ſeek after*, even the *Gentiles which know not God*: *But* rather *ſeek ye the Kingdom of God*; ſo it is expreſſed in St. *Luke*; or in the words of the Text, *Seek ye* firſt *the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*: *You*, ſaith he, who have the Happineſs to *know God*, and to whom his Glory has been particularly revealed; *you* who are bleſſed with the knowledge of his true Religion, of the Purity and Excellency of his divine Laws, and the great and eternal Reward which will attend the Practice of them; Live *ye* ſuitably to ſo excellent a Belief, and anſwerably to ſo great a degree of Knowledge: Let *your* affections be raiſed above things earthly and temporal, to thoſe which are ſpiritual, heavenly, and eternal; *Seek ye* firſt *the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*; and all theſe things, theſe earthly and temporal bleſſings, ſo far as the Wiſdom of God ſees neceſſary for your preſent comfortable ſubſiſtence, *ſhall be added unto you.*

In a foregoing Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I obſerved in them theſe three things:

SERM. XXXIV.

I. A Precept or Duty commanded; *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs.*

II. The manner and degree of the Obligation; *Seek it* firſt.

III. The Promiſe even of a *temporal* Reward annexed; *And all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.*

I. In diſcourſing upon the Precept or Duty commanded, *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*; I obſerved, that Seeking any thing heartily and effectually, implies theſe four things:

1*ſt*, That we have a juſt *value and eſteem* for the thing we pretend to ſeek after.

2*dly*, That we *fix our Attention* continually, *i. e.* habitually upon it.

3*dly*, That we be *diligent and impartial in inquiring after the beſt and certaineſt means* of attaining it. And

4*thly*, That we *immediately practiſe thoſe Means, and heartily put them in Execution.* And theſe I have already enlarged upon.

I proceed now in the II*d.* place, to conſider the particular *manner and degree* of our Obligation to this Duty, contained in the *comparative* expreſſion, Seek ye *firſt*, or (as 'tis expreſſed in St. *Luke*,) Seek ye *rather* the Kingdom of God. And here (as I before took notice in the Explication of the Text,) it is reaſonable to obſerve, that the Word *firſt*, or *rather*, as in the *comparative* Senſe it *heightens* the Obligation of the Duty, and ſignifies that we are bound to ſeek the Kingdom of God *more heartily, more earneſtly, more zealouſly*, with *greater conſtancy*, with *greater diligence*, with *ſtronger and more intenſe affections*, than can reaſonably be employed about any temporal concern; ſo, on the contrary, in the *abſolute* Senſe, 'tis a *relaxation* or *diminution* of the ſtrictneſs and rigour of the Duty; ſignifying, that we are not obliged to ſeek the Kingdom of God *wholly* and *only*, in a *total and abſolute* excluſion of all other deſires, (as ſome melancholy well-diſpoſed perſons may be apt to imagine;) but only that we are to ſeek it *chiefly* and in the *firſt* place; as being infinitely of more value and of greater importance to us, and conſequently infinitely worthier of our higheſt care and concern than any temporal and worldly affairs. But the very Word itſelf, Seek this *firſt*, implies in the proper notion of it, that *other* things alſo may be deſired *afterward, i. e.* in their due place, and with a ſubordinate affection. The Words immediately foregoing, *Take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink, or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed*, ſeem indeed to be ſpoken abſolutely and without reſtriction: And perhaps to the Apoſtles themſelves, the immediate Hearers of this Diſcourſe of our Lord, who were to have no ſettled habitation or abode, but were to preach the Goſpel from one Nation and Kingdom to another; to *them* poſſibly this inſtruction was *intended* ſo to be underſtood, in the abſolute and unreſtrained Senſe. But as the Circumſtances of Chriſtians in following times neceſſarily made the ſtrict and literal Senſe of thoſe words altogether impracticable; ſo the Words of the Text immediately following them, evidently give us room to interpret them in ſuch a manner, as to be a prohibition *only* of *immoderate* and *exceſſive* Cares; of *ſuch* Cares and Sollicitude for the things of the World, as is unworthy of the Character, and inconſiſtent with the Zeal and Diligence of thoſe whoſe Heart and whoſe Treaſure is in Heaven. 'Tis not forbidden us to deſire and to uſe moderately the things of the World; but we muſt with our *firſt* and *greateſt* care ſeek the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs.

The *Limitations* therefore of this Duty, or the particular *Degree and Manner* of the Obligation expreſſed in the Text, may be ſet forth in the following particulars.

1*ſt*, Seeking in the *firſt* place the Kingdom of God ſignifies, in the leaſt and loweſt ſenſe, that we muſt *not delay and put off to the future* our deſigns and intentions of living religiouſly. The Apoſtles were obliged, when they were firſt called by our Saviour, to leave all that they had and follow him; and we find that ſome who deſired only to take leave of their Friends, or to have time but for the burial of a neareſt Relation, were not allowed the indulgence even of ſo ſhort a delay. The Perſon who when he was commanded by our Saviour to *follow him*,

SERM. XXXIV.

answered him readily, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewel which are at home at my house, St. *Luk.* ix. 61, was told, that *no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God*: The expression 'tis plain is *figurative*; but the Sense is, He who, when he is convinced of the Truth of Religion, is not willing *immediately* to comply with the Obligations thereof, but desires still a longer and a little longer delay, is not worthy to be admitted to enjoy the benefit of it at all. And this refusal to allow of any delay, was at a time when our Lord himself had not where to lay his Head; and when the Circumstances of things were such, that no man could become a Disciple of Christ, but he must necessarily part with not only the *sinful*, but even all the *innocent* also and most allowable enjoyments and comforts of Life; at a Time when a man that had kept all the commandments from his Youth, according to the usual extent and interpretation of the Law, was dismissed by our Saviour with a very severe intimation of the danger even of not-ill-gotten possessions; because he was not willing to *sell all that he had, and give to the poor*: In a word, when no man could embrace the Christian Religion, but he must at the same time resolve to lose all that he had, and very probably even his life itself also for the sake of the Gospel. How much more *Now*, when God is pleased to require of us a much easier Obedience; when we are required, not to part with *all* that we have, but only to retrench our vain and sinful expences; not to sell *all* and give to the Poor, but to be charitable out of the Superfluities of our plenty and abundance; not to lay down our *lives*, or leave even the *comfortable Enjoyments* of life, but only to forsake the unreasonable and unfruitful Pleasures of Sin, the Madness and Follies of Profuseness, the unprofitable Gains of Unrighteousness, the hurtful and mischievous extravagancies of Intemperance, the malicious and unmanly pleasures of Pride and Arbitrariness, of Oppression, Uncharitableness, and Revenge: *How much more*, I say, *in these days*, when God is pleased to exact of us only so easy an Obedience; *how much more* unreasonable is it that men should *delay* complying with so good, so gentle, so necessary an Obligation? *How much more* unreasonable is it that men should *first* desire to satisfy themselves with the enjoyments of Sin, and then hope to mock God by *at last* desiring to enter into his Kingdom? And how unworthy must they needs be *at the End of their lives* to be admitted into his Kingdom, who would not be perswaded to employ the *beginning and best* of their days in seeking the Righteousness thereof? 'Tis no advantage to God if we are righteous and obedient to him, nor is there any accession made to *his* Self-sufficient Happiness, by *our* becoming Subjects of his Kingdom: 'Tis for our *own* benefit only, that he commands us to do Righteousness; and therefore if we slight and neglect and carelessly let slip the opportunities of preparing and qualifying ourselves to be members of his Kingdom, 'tis very just in *him* to exclude us therefrom. Not that any man, when he first comes to a true sense of Religion, how late soever it be, hath reason absolutely to despair; but that those who are better instructed in their early days, should have no incouragement to defer their Obedience.

2dly, Seeking *first* the Kingdom of God signifies, that though our *actual* intention may often lawfully be employed upon the things of the World, yet our *habitual*, *principal*, and *greatest* regard must always be fixt upon the Life that is to come. I have *before* shown, that *seeking any thing heartily and effectually*, necessarily implies among other things, that we *fix our attention continually*, i. e. *frequently and habitually upon it*. And now to apply this, in the *comparative* Sense, to the Precept in the Text: 'Tis manifest, that seeking the Kingdom of God *first*, or *before* the things of the World, necessarily implies, that even *while* we are imployed in worldly affairs, in providing for the present necessaries of life; yet our present and main Intention must always habitually be directed towards our Ultimate and Great End. *Whatsoever thou takest in hand*, (as the wise Son of *Sirach* excellently expresses it,) *remember the End, and thou shalt never do amiss*, Ecclus. vii. 36. Thus a Traveller may imploy his *immediate and present* Thoughts upon the conveniencies of his journey and the accommodations at his Inn; but yet at the same time, his *principal and chief* View will continually be upon the End of his Journey, and his safe arrival at home; and all other things will in course be directed

ted with a ſubordination to That chief Deſign. And in *this* Senſe, a man may be *at all times* ſeeking the Kingdom of God; without any way neglecting, or at all withdrawing himſelf from ſecular Buſineſs: Which was the original Error of thoſe who firſt ran into the Superſtition of a Monkiſh retirement; and, in order (as they weakly thought) to become more religious towards *God*, put themſelves out of all capacity of doing any good amongſt *Men*. There is no imployment wherein a man may not perpetually be doing ſomething for the Honour of God, for the Good of Men, or for the Improvement of the Virtues of his own Mind: There is no Buſineſs, nay, there is no innocent Diverſion, wherein he may not make it his chief and conſtant care to act always like a reaſonable man and a good Chriſtian. There is no ſtate of life wherein he may not keep a conſtant Eye upon a future ſtate, and ſo uſe the things of the preſent World, as that the great and ultimate ſcope of all his Actions may always reſpect that which is to come: He may ſtedfaſtly propoſe to himſelf one great deſign of his life, and endeavour to act always regularly upon that Deſign: He may conſtantly fix his main Intention upon his chief and ultimate End; and in every thing he does, be careful always to maintain a juſt regard to That. Every thing he undertakes may be either directly conducive to that End, or at leaſt *not contrary to and inconſiſtent* with it. Which Method of acting, *ſanctifies* all the *Buſineſs*, nay, even all the *Pleaſures* and *Diverſions* of life. And this is the SERM. XXXVI.

3*d* Thing, which the Phraſe, (Seeking *firſt* the Kingdom of God,) neceſſarily implies, namely, that whenever there ariſes a *competition* between the Intereſt of Religion and that of the World, we always *prefer* the more important ſpiritual and eternal Intereſt, before any temporal and worldly concern. *If any man come to Me*, ſaith our Saviour, *Luk.* xiv. 26. *and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Siſters, yea, and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple.* If he *hate* not Father and Mother, is, in modern language, a very harſh expreſſion: But the meaning is, (according to the well-known Uſe of ſuch ways of ſpeaking among the *Jews*,) if he be not willing to part with *them*, when there is a Neceſſity ſo to do, rather than with his *Religion*. So our Saviour himſelf explains it, St. *Matt.* x. 37. *He that loveth Father or Mother* more *than Me, is not worthy of me;* ——— *and he that taketh not his croſs, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* We have reaſon to bleſs God we are not *now* called to ſo ſevere a trial; neither are we required to part with *all things* for his ſake, as the Diſciples in the primitive times were obliged to do: But we are *at all times* under the ſame Obligation to be in *Readineſs* to loſe all, to have an *indifferency* for the things of the World *comparatively* to our Religion; and to be habitually in ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as to be *always willing* to part with whatſoever ſhall at any time come in competition with our Duty. And of this there *are* Trials, even in our preſent circumſtances, by which Men *may* judge, in great meaſure, of their own Sincerity or Inſincerity in this particular. For inſtance; If a man, rather than deny himſelf the unlawful and unreaſonable pleaſure of a Debauch; if, rather than part with the unjuſt gains of Fraud and Deceit, of Oppreſſion and unrighteous Judgment; if, rather than reſtrain the fooliſh and unfruitful Vanity of a profane Jeſt, of mockery and ſcoffing at Religion; he is willing *Now* to lay aſide all his hopes of Heaven (as every vicious man plainly does, notwithſtanding his profeſſion of Chriſtianity;) ſuch a perſon may very eaſily judge, *how* ready he would be to leave *all*, even the *innocent* enjoyments of life, and even *life itſelf*, for the ſake of that Religion which he *now* ſo ſlightly and upon every trivial an occaſion openly diſhonours. *He* indeed who *now* plucks out a *right eye*, or cuts off a *right hand*, who reſiſts great temptations of unrighteouſneſs, and, by the Spirit of Religion, mortifies violent Paſſions and ſtrong corrupt inclinations; ſuch a one may reaſonably pretend, and has good evidence, has juſt ground of hope within himſelf, that if it ſhould pleaſe God to call him to ſo ſevere a trial, he *ſhould* be able to lay down even his life for his Religion. But if a man be not faithful in that which is *leaſt*, if he cannot prevail with himſelf to go through the *ſmalleſt* difficulty, what ground has he to pretend, that he would be faithful in that which is *much*, and undergo the *ſevereſt and moſt difficult* trial?

In theſe particulars ſeem to be contained the full meaning and intention of the Precept, Seek ye *firſt* the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs.

It

SERM. XXXIV.

It remains that I proceed briefly in the IIId and laſt place; To conſider the Promiſe annexed even of a temporal reward; *and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* Now

From this Promiſe we may ſeem reaſonably to infer theſe three things.

1. That, *generally* ſpeaking, God bleſſes the endeavours of the righteous, and
1 Kings iii. 13 of thoſe who truſt in him; at leaſt ſo far, as to ſupply them with the neceſſary ſupports and conveniencies of Life. I *have been young, and now am old*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *and yet ſaw I never the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging their bread.* Which Obſervation, though it was indeed more univerſally true under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, than in the Goſpel-ſtate; yet even *ſtill* for the more part, *Godlineſs*, as St. *Paul* declares, *has the Promiſe* even *of the Life that now is*: And our Saviour, through his whole Argument in the Context, ſeems to ſuppoſe, that Providence, which ſecretly directs and over-rules all Events, is particularly concerned to make proviſion for thoſe, who in the faithful diſcharge of their duty rely upon him.

2. When this happens *otherwiſe*, (as in the caſe of *Perſecution* it neceſſarily muſt;) then from the Promiſe here annexed we may reaſonably conclude, that, what a righteous man loſes upon account of his Religion, ſhall by the Care of Providence be, Some other way, made good to him. *There is no man*, ſaith our Saviour, *that has left houſe, or brethren or ſiſters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my ſake and the goſpel; but he ſhall receive an hundred fold now* in this time, ——*with Perſecutions*; i. e. he ſhall either in the courſe of Providence be reſtored, to more than he has loſt; or he ſhall receive more than an equivalent in that peace and comfort and Satisfaction of mind, that joy in the Holy Ghoſt, which ariſes from a Senſe of a good Conſcience and of the Favour of God.

3. When *neither* of theſe are ſecured to a man, (as they can only be affirmed for the *moſt* part;) then it may certainly be depended upon, that his reward *hereafter*, ſhall be ſo much the greater. *Uſually* he ſhall in the *preſent time* receive an hundred fold, *together with Perſecutions*; but in the End *infallibly* eternal life. It was a noble Anſwer to this purpoſe, (wherewith I ſhall conclude,) which the three children of the *Jews* gave to *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*, when they were commanded to fall down and worſhip the graven Image which he had ſet up, under pain of being caſt alive into a burning fiery furnace; *Dan.* iii. 17. It was propoſed to them to forſake the religion of their God for the Law of the King and the Religion of the country; and their Anſwer was; *If it be ſo; our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he* will *deliver us out of thine hand, O King: But if not;* (if he does *not* think fit to deliver us; *yet*) *be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the graven Image which thou haſt ſet up.* They depended upon God, if he did *not* think fit to deliver them from *temporal* Death, that he would recompenſe it to them with Life and Happineſs *eternal*.

SERMON

SERMON XXXV.

Of the Liberty of Moral Agents.

St. JOH. viii. 32.

And ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you Free.

THE Evangeliſt, in the foregoing part of this Chapter, having recorded a large Diſcourſe of our Saviour's concerning his being *the Light of the World*, or, the *Teacher of true Religion*, ver. 12; concerning the Teſtimony he bore of *himſelf* by the Nature and Tendency of his *Doctrine*; and the Teſtimony *the Father* bore of him, by his miraculous *Works*, ver. 14 and 18; concerning his *Departure* out of the World, and the *Reaſon* of the *Jews* refuſing to believe on him, ver. 21 and 23; concerning the *manner* of his Death, and the great *Succeſs* wherewith the Goſpel ſhould afterward be propagated, ver. 28; The Evangeliſt, I ſay, having at large recorded theſe *Diſcourſes* of our Saviour, proceeds in the next place to relate the *Effect* theſe Diſcourſes had upon the People, ver. 30; *As he ſpake theſe Words, many believed on him:* Namely, Upon *Jeſus*'s foretelling ſeveral Things that were to happen to Himſelf and to

SERM. XXXV.

SERM. XXXV.

the Nation of the *Jews*, many that heard him were diſpoſed to conſider and compare what they had known and heard of him before; and being perſwaded that he was a Perſon ſent from God, they declared that they *would* become his Diſciples. But Jeſus knowing who theſe Converts were, and that their Faith was not firm and well-grounded; and that with thoſe new Diſciples many alſo of the unbelieving *Jews* hypocritically joined themſelves, with intent to take ſome private Opportunity of *killing* him; as appears from the following part of the Hiſtory: He ſaid unto them, ver. 31. *If ye* continue in *my Word*, then *are ye my Diſciples indeed*; If ye will be truly my Diſciples, ye muſt not only profeſs by a ſudden perſwaſion to be convinced of the Truth of what I ſay, but ye muſt ſo retain and ſteddily adhere to my Doctrine, as to conform your Lives and Practices thereto; *If ye* continue *in my Word*, then *are ye my Diſciples indeed*. And then he adds in the Words of the Text; *And ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you Free*. The meaning is; And by ſuch Practice, you will continually attain a more and more perfect *Knowledge* of the Truth; and *That Knowledge* will ſecure to you the greateſt and moſt deſirable *Freedom* in the World.

That by *Truth* in the *New Teſtament*, is meant the general Doctrine of the Goſpel revealed to us by Chriſt, I ſuppoſe needs not any particular Proof in this place. That *continuing* in the Practice of Chriſt's Commandments, and ſincerely endeavouring to obey the Will of God, is one of the beſt and greateſt Helps to enable a man to underſtand perfectly, the *Truth* and *Reaſonableneſs*, the *Neceſſity* and *Excellency* of the Doctrine of the Goſpel; is alſo ſufficiently evident, without farther explication at This Time. The only Difficulty in the Words of the Text, is the Senſe of that latter part, *And the Truth ſhall make you Free*. For what Relation there is between *Truth* in the *Underſtanding* and *Liberty* in the *Actions*, does not appear at firſt ſight: And 'tis ſtill in the reading of Scripture as great a Paradox to ſome Chriſtians at This day, as it ſeemed to be to the *Jews* at the time when it was ſpoken; that it ſhould be ſaid of ſuch Perſons as had never been *Slaves*, that the *Truth* ſhould make them *Free*. The Explication is given by our Saviour in the Words following the Text; and yet given in ſuch a manner, as not to appear but to thoſe who read with Attention. For the *Jews*, when our Saviour had ſpoken theſe Words, *the Truth ſhall make you Free*, taking them in the groſs and literal Senſe, replied, ver. 33. *We be Abraham's Seed*; we have by Deſcent a natural Right to Freedom, *and were never in bondage to any man*; *How ſayeſt thou then, Ye ſhall be made Free*? Upon This, our Lord opens to them the true Senſe of the Words, ver. 34. *Verily I ſay unto you, Whoſoever committeth* Sin, *is the Servant of Sin*. Which is to ſay: Ye fancy, becauſe with reſpect to *Bodily* Service ye are not in bondage to any man, that therefore ye are really *Free men*. But foraſmuch as *to* whomſoever *men yield themſelves ſervants to obey, his Servants they are to whom they obey*; and *of whomſoever a man is overcome, of the ſame is he brought in bondage*; therefore, ſo long as you continue in your Sins, you are as really Slaves, as any perſon that is in bondage to the ſevereſt Maſter; For there cannot be a greater Slave, than he who is under the Power and Dominion of unreaſonable Luſts. This is the evident meaning of that expreſſion; *Whoſoever committeth Sin*; not by inadvertency or ſurprize, not by miſtake or ſudden incurſion, but deliberately and habitually, as was the Caſe of thoſe *Jews* our Saviour diſcourſed with; *whoſoever* ſo *committeth Sin, is the Servant of Sin*. And This will illuſtrate the meaning of that more difficult paſſage, which follows immediately in the next words, ver. 35; *And the Servant abideth not in the Houſe for ever; but the Son abideth for ever: If the Son therefore ſhall make you Free, ye ſhall be Free indeed*. I know indeed, ſays our Lord, that you eſteem yourſelves highly, upon your belonging to the Family and Houſe of God, which was firſt ſet in order by *Moſes*; and that upon this account you will claim to yourſelves even That ſpiritual Freedom whereof I am now ſpeaking. But, let me aſſure you, neither is that Privilege you boaſt of, your being the peculiar people of God, ſufficient of itſelf to give you real Freedom from the Dominion and Guilt of Sin; neither, if it could, was the Authority of *Moſes* intended to continue always, but only for a Time, like that of a *Servant*, and to give place at length to the Authority of the *Son*, whoſe Government in God's houſe is to continue for ever. Wherefore the only means, by which you

you can preſerve to yourſelves the Privilege of God's peculiar Family, and obtain a perfect Freedom from the Slavery of Sin, is, that ye ſubmit to the Authority of the *Son* who is now come into the World, and that ye continue in Obedience to his Doctrine and Government. *The Servant abideth not in the Houſe for ever; but the Son abideth for ever: If the Son therefore ſhall make you Free, ye ſhall be Free indeed.* SERM. XXXV.

The Deſign and Meaning of our Saviour's whole Diſcourſe being thus explained, the Doctrine contained in the Words of the Text appears evidently to be This; That the *religious Reſtraints* laid upon men by the Goſpel are really and truly the *greateſt Liberty*; and the *Service of God*, the moſt *perfect Freedom: If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Diſciples indeed: And ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you Free.*

LIBERTY, all men are ſenſible, is a Jewel of ineſtimable Value; and therefore there is nothing more earneſtly or more juſtly contended for, nothing more univerſally or more reaſonably deſired. But, alas! As *Children* are often eagerly deſirous of what they do not underſtand, and know not when they are in Poſſeſſion of what they deſire, but are put off and pleaſed with falſe reſemblances of things, and hold faſt ſomething really contrary to what they think they are fond of: So, in This particular, *Men* themſelves, even Wiſe men and Learned, the Rich and the Potent, the cunning and the moſt ſenſible in other Affairs, are very frequently impoſed upon, (I ſhould ſay, impoſe upon themſelves,) and love to be deceived, and take pains to abuſe their own Underſtandings; and, while they love Liberty above all Things, embrace Slavery in the ſtead thereof; ſhutting their Eyes, and calling things by falſe Names, and ſtiling Bondage Liberty, and Liberty Bondage. For while *All* men contend for Liberty, wherein does the *greater part* of the World imagine true Liberty to conſiſt? Moſt men ſeem to place it in being allowed to let looſe the Reins to all their Appetites and Paſſions without controul; to be under no reſtraint either from the Laws of Men, or from the Fear of God. *Princes* generally think it to conſiſt in having the Power of tyrannizing over the multitude of their Subjects, and ſacrificing the common Rights and Properties of Mankind to their own ſingle and unreaſonable Ambition. The *common People* are apt to place it in unbounded Licentiouſneſs, and having no ſuperiour but the Humour of the Multitude. The *Covetous perſon* would gladly be allowed to increaſe his Treaſure by ſome ſhorter ſteps than thoſe of honeſt Induſtry and patient Labour. The *Debauchee* thinks no Chains more troubleſome, than thoſe which would confine his Pleaſures from irregularity and exceſs. And oh! how happy would the *revengeful ſpirit* be, might he but have Liberty to ſatisfy his Malice, without preſent Shame or future Danger! This, 'tis to be feared, is the Notion too great a part of Mankind have of Liberty. And what a Liberty is This? Is it not like the Liberty a Madman deſires of being permitted to deſtroy himſelf? Is it any Thing more than a Liberty to chuſe the worſt of Slaveries, and to exchange the Government of a moſt reaſonable Maſter, for that of the worſt and cruelleſt Tyrant; For, *what* does the *Ambitious Prince* or the *Licentious Multitude*; what does the *Covetous*, and *Revengeful*, or the *Debauched Sinner*; but only chuſe to be a Servant to *Paſſion*, inſtead of a Follower of *Right Reaſon*? What is it that makes a *Beaſt* be a Creature of leſs Liberty than *Man*, but only that its natural Appetites more neceſſarily govern all its Actions, and that it is not indued with a Faculty of Reaſon, whereby to exert itſelf, and gain a Power or Liberty of over-ruling thoſe Appetites? For if the true Liberty of a moral Agent does not principally conſiſt in the Power of over-ruling ſuch Appetites; *wherein* lies the Excellency of human Nature at all, above the inferiour Creation? Or what ſuperiority has Man above the Beaſts that periſh, in any *Moral regard*; if his greater Knowledge and Underſtanding ſerves only to make him feel and be ſenſible of his Subjection to thoſe lower Appetites, which the other Creatures are naturally ſubject to, without being ſenſible or having any uneaſy Reflections that they are ſo? Is not the Difference in ſuch a Caſe, This only; that the Man is really the greater Slave, or has the leſs Liberty of the Two, becauſe *He* only is by his Reaſon capable of underſtanding that he wants it; If a man's Body be under confinement, or he be impotent in his Limbs, he is then deprived of his

SERM. XXXV.

his *bodily* Liberty: And for the ſame Reaſon, if his *Mind* be blinded by ſottiſh Errors, and his Reaſon over-ruled by violent Paſſions; Is not this likewiſe plainly as great a Slavery and as true a Confinement? For, *to whomſoever men yield themſelves ſervants to obey*, (as the Apoſtle excellently expreſſes it,) are they not *his ſervants to whom they obey*, Rom. vi. 16; and *of whomſoever a man is overcome, of the ſame* alſo *is he* not *brought in bondage*, 2 Pet. ii. 19?

But here it is obvious for the Libertine to reply, that he has no Notion of the Slavery we ſpeak of, nor is at all ſenſible that he is under any reſtraint: For *what* greater Liberty can a man have, than to do what he pleaſes? or what can he deſire more, than to do what he wills without controul? I anſwer: This is indeed the True Definition of mere *phyſical* or *natural* Liberty; that is to ſay, of That Liberty which is common to Man with every living Creature, with the ſavageſt Lyon, and with the meaneſt Inſect. For *They* alſo do what they will, and go and come as they pleaſe, and follow the Inſtinct, and gratify all the Appetites of Nature. But the Liberty of a *Moral* Agent and of a *rational* Being, implies ſomething more. It implies a Liberty of doing what is *Right*; a Freedom of hearkning to what *Reaſon* dictates, and a Power of executing what the unprejudiced and improved *Underſtanding* judges to be fit; fit and reaſonable, fit for *Him* who is a rational Perſon, fit for any *Other* rational Perſon in *His* place, to do. And *this* Liberty the Senſual perſon parts with; and ſuffers himſelf to be captivated, *againſt* his Reaſon by the Law of Sin.

The Licentious Sinner will ſtill reply; He is not *ſenſible* of any ſuch Captivity, or any Slavery he is under; he gives himſelf his full Liberty to do what he thinks fit; and greater Freedom than This how can he deſire! But the Anſwer to This Fallacy is evident. For as a Man while he ſleeps in his Priſon, is not ſenſible of his Confinement, and yet continues confined: Or a Madman imagines the Room he is ſhut up in to be as ſpacious as the World; and yet receives no inlargement: Or an Ideot embraces and admires his Chain as the brighteſt Ornament, and yet it continues a Chain: So the vitious Libertine, while his Eyes are blinded with Ignorance and Prejudice, his Underſtanding darkned with falſe Repreſentations, and his Will bribed perpetually with deceitful Allurements; while he loves the Dominion of Sin, and takes pleaſure in the Practice of Unrighteouſneſs, and ſilences the Voice of Reaſon and Conſcience; he fancies himſelf Maſter of the moſt unbounded Liberty, and yet at the ſame time is really in bondage to the moſt unreaſonable Service. The Scripture deſcribes this State by a moſt elegant Similitude, of mens being Dead *in Treſpaſſes and Sins*; Eph. ii. 1, 5; by their being incloſed *in the Snare of the Devil, and taken* captive *by him at his Will*; 2 Tim. ii. 26; by their being *brought into* Captivity *to the Law of Sin*; Rom. vii. 23. By the Hiſtory of *Sampſon*, who, after many repeated inſults, yet would not ſee the Bondage he was in, till his Strength was departed from him: And by the deſcription of a fooliſh young man led away with the inticements of a ſtrange Woman; *Prov.* vii. 21. *With her much fair Speech ſhe cauſed him to yield, with the flattering of her lips ſhe forced him. He goeth after her ſtraightway, as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks; Till a dart ſtrike through his liver, as a Bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.*

But This, is not *generally* the Caſe of Sinners. *More uſually*, they not only *are* in Captivity to Sin, but *feel alſo and know* themſelves to be ſo; and yet have not Courage to aſſert their Liberty. Their *Reaſon* is over-ruled; and their *Paſſions* govern them, even *againſt* their Judgment. Which, in a figurative ſenſe, is exactly what *Solomon* literally complained of, *Eccleſ.* x. 7; *I have ſeen Servants upon Horſes, and Princes walking as Servants upon the Earth.* When *Reaſon*, which ought to *govern*, is thus *dethroned*; and the Fear of God, and all Senſe of Religion laid aſide; the man is then under the Dominion of his Paſſions, as of many diſagreeing Maſters to be ſerved at once; and his Heart is *like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe Waters caſt up mire and dirt*; Iſ. lvii. 20. He is toſſed to and fro with impotent and impatient *Deſires*, torn in pieces

pieces with eager and impetuous *Appetites*, puſht on by unruly and exorbitant *Affections*, tormented with vain and diſappointing *Hopes*, and as often with groundleſs or too well-grounded *Fears*; conſumed with *Envy*, or ſwelled with *Pride*; raging with *Anger*, or anxious after *Revenge*. This is the thraldom of a man enſlaved to Sin; and *Who ſhall deliver him from the Body of this Death?* The Scripture deſcribes the miſerable ſtate of ſuch Perſons, by many elegant ways of Expreſſion: Telling us, that they are *Servants of Sin*; John. viii. 34. *Servants to uncleanneſs and to iniquity*; Rom. vi. 19; and *Servants of Corruption*; 2 Pet. ii. 19. that they *cannot ceaſe from Sin*; 2 Pet. ii. 14; that *Sin* hath *Dominion over them*, and *reigns in their mortal Bodies*, while they *obey it in the Luſts thereof*; Rom. vi. 14, 12. That tho' in their mind they approve the Law of God, yet they *ſee another law* in their *members warring againſt the law of* their *mind*, *and bringing* them *into captivity to the law of Sin*; *ſo that* they *cannot do the things that* they *would*; Rom. vii. 22; And Gal. v. 17. That when at any time *to will is preſent with* them, yet *how to perform that which is good* they *find not*; *For the good that* they *would*, they *do not*; *but the evil which* they *would not*, *That* they *do*; Rom. vii. 18, and ver. 15; *that which* they *do*, they *allow not*; *For what* they *would*, *That do* they *not*; *but what* they *hate*, *That* they *do*. All which, is comprized in One expreſſive word in the verſe foregoing, ver. 14; they are *ſold* under Sin: That is, they have by long ill habits and corrupt practice, as it were *given up* themſelves, *parted with their Liberty*, and *yielded* themſelves abſolutely into the *Snare of the Devil*, *to be taken captive by him at his Will*. The Phraſe is twice applied in the *Old Teſtament* to *Ahab*; 1 Kings xxi. 20, 25; that he *did* ſell *himſelf to work Wickedneſs in the Sight of the Lord*. And twice, to the whole people of *Iſrael*; in the days of *Hoſea*; 2 *Kings* xvii. 17; that they ſold *themſelves to do evil in the Sight of the Lord*; and in the days of *Antiochus*; 1 Macc. i. 15; that they *were* ſold *to do miſchief*.

Pſ. xix. 13. cxix. 133.

And now if this be the Caſe of habitual Sinners; we may well ask concerning *Liberty*, in the words wherein *Job* put the Queſtion concerning true *Wiſdom*; *Where* then *ſhall* Liberty *be found? and where is the place of* True Freedom? And the Anſwer may be returned in the words of the ſame excellent Author; *Behold*, *the Fear of the Lord*, *that is*, Freedom; *and to depart from Evil*, *is* True Liberty.

Job xxviii. 12. Job xxviii. 28.

The True Liberty of a Rational and Moral Agent, conſiſts in his being able to follow *right Reaſon only*, without Hindrance or Reſtraint. It conſiſts in a clear unbiaſſed Judgment, and in a Power of acting conformably thereunto. Man therefore is then *Free*, when his *Reaſon* is not awed by baſe *Fears*, nor bribed by fooliſh and fantaſtick *Hopes*; when it is not tumultuouſly hurried away by *Luſts* and *Paſſions*, nor cheated and deluded by falſe Appearances of preſent *Good*; but conſiders *impartially*, and judges *wiſely*, and acts *effectually* and with Reſolution. This is the Liberty of a rational Agent; the Freedom of a Man, of a Chriſtian, of an Angel. Not that in this preſent frail ſtate, we can ever actually arrive at ſuch a perfect Freedom; but that by ſtudying and practiſing the Truth, the Truth *of Nature*, and the Truth *of Religion*, we may and ought continually more and more to aſſert and improve our Freedom, till at length we arrive at the glorious Liberty of the children of God.

But here the profane Libertine will ask, as before; Is it not a greater Liberty, for him to follow abſolutely his own Pleaſure, than to be under the direction of the Laws of right Reaſon and Religion? I anſwer; It is by no means ſo great a Liberty: For when a man follows *true Reaſon*, his Will is directed by its natural and proper Motive, which is a right Underſtanding; But when he follows what he calls his *own Pleaſure*, his Will is then directed by a falſe and unnatural Motive; by *Error and Prejudice*, by *Obſtinacy and falſe Appearances of Things*. Now it is very evident, that what *Impotency or Bonds* are to the *natural Liberty of* the *Body*, that very ſame thing is *Ignorance or Paſſion* to the *moral Liberty of the Mind*. Wherefore as the Body is then free, when it is moved by the Natural Action of the Blood and Spirits, and not by the convulſive Motions and Violence of a Diſeaſe; ſo the Mind is then and then only

SERM. XXXV.

Free, when its Choice is directed by the natural Motive of right Reaſon, and not by the violent impetus of a blind and headſtrong Paſſion.

This Argument may further be illuſtrated in the following manner. God Himſelf is a Being, as of all other Perfections, ſo particularly of the moſt perfect and complete *Liberty*. Now *His* Liberty conſiſts in this, that being infinitely *Knowing* and infinitely *Powerful*, 'tis impoſſible he ſhould ever be influenced by any *Violence*, or by any *Deceit*; but his *Will* is always directed by *abſolute Right and Reaſon only*: And This is what we vulgarly call, his being Neceſſarily *Juſt and Good*. Not that *Juſtice and Goodneſs* are *Neceſſary* in him by a phyſical, natural and immediate *Neceſſity*, excluſive of Will and Choice, in the ſame Senſe as his *Omnipreſence* or *Eternity* is Neceſſary; (For then it would be no more proper to return him *Thanks* for the Exerciſe of his *Juſtice and Goodneſs*, than for being *Eternal or Omnipreſent*; Which is manifeſtly abſurd.) But the meaning of his being Neceſſarily *Juſt and Good*, is This only; that the *Liberty* by which he always *chooſes* what is eternally and abſolutely right and good, can never poſſibly be infringed, no not in the leaſt degree, by any Error or Paſſion, by any Violence or by any Deceit. The Liberty of *Man*, therefore, conſiſts proportionably in the very ſame things; in his being free from all thoſe falſe Biaſſes and corrupt Inclinations, which would cauſe his Will to decline from the Direction of Right Reaſon. And where This Liberty is preſerved by good men to any conſiderable degree of Perfection, there the Holy Ghoſt is pleaſed to expreſs it ſelf in ſuch a manner even concerning *Them* alſo, as to affirm that they *cannot ſin*; 1 Joh. iii. 9. Which expreſſion is therefore ſo far from implying their having *no Liberty of* Will at all, as ſome have vainly imagined; that on the contrary it ſignifies their having their *Liberty ſo perfect*, in Imitation of God, as (abating the unavoidable infirmities of human Nature) to be in *no danger of* being biaſſed or ſeduced. This is what our Saviour promiſes in the Text, that if men will continue in
John viii. 32. his word, then they *ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make them free.* And it ſufficiently makes good the general Doctrine I at firſt drew from the Words; namely, that the *Religious Reſtraints* laid upon men by the Goſpel, are really and truly the *greateſt Liberty*; and the *Service of God*, the moſt *perfect Freedom*.

There are ſome other Senſes in Scripture, of the Words *Liberty* and *Bondage*; which for the fuller Underſtanding of the Text, in which they are directly or indirectly comprehended, deſerve briefly to be mentioned in this Place.

And *1ſt*, Chriſtian *Liberty*, in many Places of Scripture, and principally in St. *Paul*'s epiſtles, ſignifies deliverance from the Obligation of the Ceremo-
Acts xv. 10. nial law; from that Yoke, *which neither our Fathers, nor we*, as its elſewhere expreſſed, *were able to bear*. Of This it is that he ſpeaks, when he tells us
Rom. viii. 15. that we *have not received the Spirit of* Bondage *again, but the Spirit of Adoption*; that, *when we were children, we were in* bondage *under the Elements of the World*; Gal. iv. 3; that *the Lord is That Spirit*; *and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty*; 2 Cor. iii. 17. The expreſſion is difficult, and has been much miſunderſtood: But the meaning is, that the Goſpel is the Spirit and End of the Law; and where the Spirit, or thing ſignified is fulfilled, there the type, or bare letter, is ſuperſeded, *The Lord is that Spirit*; *and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty*. Of *This* alſo he is to be underſtood in thoſe places, where he adviſes Chriſtians to beware of falſe bre-
Gal. ii. 4. vi. 1. Gal. v. 13. 1 Cor. viii. 9. ix. 21. thren that would *ſpie out their Liberty*, and *bring them* again *into bondage*; to *ſtand faſt in the Liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free, and not be intangled again with the yoke of bondage*; *not to uſe Liberty for an occaſion to the Fleſh*; to *take heed leſt by any means this Liberty of theirs, become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak*: And accordingly concerning *himſelf* he declares in this reſpect, that *To them that are without law, he* became *as without Law, yet being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Chriſt*. The meaning is, that though men were delivered by Chriſt, from the bondage of the *ceremonial* Law; yet were they by no means diſcharged from any *moral* Obligations.

And

SERM. XXXV.

And the ſame is the intent of St. *Peter*'s Exhortation, 1 *Pet.* ii. 16. *As free, and* yet *not uſing your* Liberty *for a cloak of Maliciouſneſs, but as the* Servants *of God.*

2*dly*. In other places of Scripture, the *Freedom* of Chriſtians, ſignifies their Deliverance from the Bondage of that *Fear*, which was the Conſequence of the Curſe and Severity of the Law. Of the Wicked it is ſaid, that they *flee, when no man purſueth*; and *are in great Fear*, even *where no Fear is*. Not that they have *no juſt* Cauſe of Fear; but on the contrary, becauſe they have always *ſo* much *reaſon* to be afraid, that it often ſhows forth itſelf even upon *improper* occaſions. Prov. xxviii. 1. Pſ. liii. 5.

But further; even with regard to thoſe, who *are not* notoriouſly wicked; their being under the Law, is in general called the *Spirit of Bondage to Fear*, Rom. viii. 15. And their Deliverance from that Fear by the gracious Terms of the Goſpel, is ſtiled *the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry Abba Father*; whereby they apply to God, not as to a ſtrict and ſevere Judge, but as to a merciful and reconciled Father. And our Lord is ſaid to have *delivered* them, Heb. ii. 15. *who through Fear of Death were all their Life-time ſubject to Bondage.*

3*dly*. The *Liberty* of a Chriſtian, may alſo ſometimes very properly ſignify, his Deliverance from the Slavery of endleſs *Superſtition*. Of the Prophets of *Baal* it is recorded; 1 *Kings* xxviii. 28; that *they cried aloud, and cut themſelves with knives and lancets, till the Blood guſhed out upon them:* And of ſome other Idolaters; that they *cauſed their own Children, to paſs through the Fire to Moloch.* Thoſe among the Heathen, who were leſs Cruel; yet were in perpetual Fear, of *Dreams* and *Omens*, and vain *Preſages*; and in continual Bondage to tedious and uſeleſs Obſervations. The Corrupters of Chriſtianity have after the ſame Example, introduced an intolerable Burden of Pilgrimages and Abſtinencies, and voluntary Humilities; which *Who has required at their Hands?* All which things, when a reaſonable man ſeriouſly conſiders, he may very properly ask himſelf that Queſtion, which *Naaman*'s ſervant put to his Maſter; 2 *Kings* v. 13; *If* God *had bidden thee do ſome great thing, wouldſt thou not have done it? How much rather then when he ſaith unto thee, Waſh and be clean*; when he *only* ſaith unto thee, Repent and amend.

But 4*thly* and *laſtly*, That which it chiefly and above all ſignifies in Scripture-phraſe, is (what I have applied it to in the foregoing diſcourſe) *Freedom* from the Slavery *of Sin*. So the Apoſtle expreſly; *Rom.* vi. 18; *Being then made* Free *from* Sin, *ye became the Servants of Righteouſneſs*; Rom. viii. 2; *The Law of the Spirit of Life in Chriſt Jeſus, has made me free from the law of* Sin *and* Death; and *ver.* 21; *delivered from the* bondage *of Corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* Where this *Liberty* is improved to any conſiderable degree, the perſon is ſaid to be *dead* to *Sin*; in oppoſition to thoſe who on the contrary, for want of any improvement at all, are repreſented as *dead* in *Sin*. Rom. vi. 7; *He that is dead*, (or as it is explained by an eaſier Phraſe in the verſe before, he in whom *the* body *of* Sin is *deſtroyed*,) is *free from Sin*; and 1 Pet. iv. 1. *He that has ſuffered in the Fleſh*, (*viz.* he that has conquered his corrupt affections;) *has ceaſed from Sin*. That the Words, *ſuffered in the Fleſh*, muſt in this place be underſtood thus, not literally but figuratively, appears evidently from the following Words; *v.* 2. *That he no longer ſhould live the reſt of* his Time in the Fleſh, *to the Luſts of Men, but to the Will of God*. The *higheſt* improvement and perfection of this Liberty in the preſent Life, is, when a man not only obeys the Commands of God, but does it habitually with eaſe and pleaſure; when the *Commandments* of God ſeem *not grievous* to him, but the *yoke of* Chriſt *eaſy*, and his *burden* light; when he can *delight to know* the *Ways of* God, and *call* his *Sabbaths* a *delight*; Iſ. lviii. 2, 13; when he can ſay with *Job*, ch. xxii. ver. 26; that he *has his delight in the Almighty*; with the Pſalmiſt; *Pſ.* i. 2; that *his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he exerciſe himſelf day and night*; and with our Saviour himſelf; *Joh.* iv. 34. *My meat is to do the Will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his Work*. When *This* is the Caſe, which is the higheſt pitch of Chriſtian Pſ. cxix. 14, 16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 174.

SERM. XXXV.

ſtian Perfection upon Earth; then may it be ſaid of ſuch a Perſon, that he *continueth in the perfect Law of Liberty*, Jam. i. 25; ii. 12. Then may he cry out with the Pſalmiſt, *Pſ.* cxvi. 16; *O Lord, I am thy ſervant and the ſon of thine handmaid, thou haſt broken my Bonds in ſunder*; And *I will walk at* Liberty, *for I ſeek thy commandments*; Pſ. cxix. 45. Then is fulfilled That Prophecy, *Iſ.* lxi. 1; applied by our Saviour to Himſelf, *Luke* iv, 18; *He has anointed me to preach the Goſpel to the Poor,—to preach deliverance to the captives,—to ſet at* Liberty *them that are bruiſed.* Laſtly, of ſuch a Perſon, who thus delights to do the Will of God, it may be declared, though *he be a Servant*, that *yet he is the Lord's free man*, 1 Cor. vii. 22; that becauſe *the Son* has *made him free*, therefore *he is free indeed*; Jo. viii. 36; or (as it is in the Words of the Text,) that *he knows the Truth, and the Truth doth make him Free.*

SERMON

SERMON XXXVI.

A Virtuous Mind the beſt Help to underſtand True Religion.

DAN. xii. 10. latter part.

And none of the Wicked ſhall underſtand; But the Wiſe ſhall underſtand.

TO ſeek a man's true and final Intereſt, by parting with ſome preſent and inconſiderable Advantages for the ſake of more and much greater ones to come, is the proper Act of *Wiſdom*; and the general Character of *Folly*, is the purchaſing ſome trivial preſent Benefit, at the hazard of much better and more valuable things in reverſion. For This reaſon, in Scripture-phraſe, *Religion and Virtue* are almoſt always ſignified under the denomination of *Wiſdom*; and *Folly*, is but another Name for *Sin*. The *Sinner* and *the Fool*, are always reciprocal Terms; and no man is ſtiled *Wiſe* by the Spirit of God, upon any other account than that of being

SERM. XXXVI.

being *Religious*. For *unto man he ſaid; The Fear of the Lord, That is Wiſdom; and to depart from Evil, is Underſtanding*; Job. xxviii. 28. And This is ſo much the *known* language of Scripture, that I need in this place but juſt mention it. Thus *Eccleſ.* ii. 13; *Then I ſaw*, ſays *Solomon*, that *Wiſdom excelleth Folly, as far as Light excelleth Darkneſs*; the Meaning is, that Religion and Virtue is *as much more* excellent and more profitable to men than Wickedneſs, as one thing can *be* preferable to another. And in the Words of the Text; *None of the* Wicked *ſhall underſtand: But the* Wiſe, (thoſe who are ſuch in *oppoſition to* the Folly of Wickedneſs, that is, the *Righteous*) *ſhall underſtand*.

To *Underſtand*, may be taken in two Senſes; Either to ſignify the underſtanding of theſe *particular* Prophecies; or the underſtanding the true nature of Religion in *general*. In *Both* theſe Senſes, the Words are very proper and emphatical; and in *Both*, they are very remarkably fulfilled. If we take them in the *former* Senſe; *None of the Wicked ſhall underſtand*; i. e. none of them ſhall apprehend the true meaning and intent of theſe Prophecies; *But the Wiſe, viz.* the *righteous* and well-diſpoſed, the careful and diligent inquirers, *ſhall underſtand them*: If we take them, I ſay, in This Senſe, then they were very remarkably fulfilled upon the *Jews* in our Saviour's time; who, notwithſtanding that this Prophecy of *Daniel* contained as clear a Prediction as could be deſired, of the *Time* and *Manner* of our Saviour's appearing in the Fleſh; yet through their obſtinate prejudices againſt *Him* and his *doctrine*, they reſolved *not to ſee* it: And becauſe there were other paſſages in the Prophecy, more *obſcure*, and *difficult* to be interpreted; therefore they would by no means be perſwaded to underſtand what was *plain*. The like to which, has exactly happened among *Chriſtians* alſo. For whereas in the New Teſtament, there are very many Prophecies, and as expreſs as can be; of a Man of Sin to be revealed; of a general Defection and Apoſtacy in the latter times; of a Worldly Power ſitting in the Seat of God, and preſuming to change Laws and Times, and compelling the *whole World* to worſhip him, by ſubmitting to his arbitrary and unreaſonable Power; and that the Head of this Corruption is that great City which ruleth over the Kingdoms of the Earth: yet becauſe there are indeed other paſſages in the Prophetick part of the New Teſtament more obſcure and difficult; therefore thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, and as many as favour their abſurd pretenſions, reſolve they will not underſtand the cleareſt Deſcriptions of things; but *will* continue to make Temporal Power, Riches and Grandeur, a Mark or Note of the *True* Church; when the Scripture on the contrary expreſly makes it a Mark of the *Falſe* one, perſecuting and ſcattering the true Worſhippers of God.

But *ſecondly*; if we take the Words of the Text in the *latter* ſenſe, to expreſs Men's Underſtanding, not of theſe *particular* Prophecies, but of the true Nature of Religion *in general*; they are then evidently fulfilled in the greater part of Men. *None of the Wicked underſtand*; *But the Wiſe*, that is, the *Righteous* do *underſtand*. And This being the moſt *generally uſeful* Senſe of the Words, I ſhall in the following Diſcourſe conſider them according to *This* Interpretation. And ſo the Propoſition they contain, is This: That a *virtuous Diſpoſition of Mind* is the *beſt Help*, and a *vicious inclination* the *greateſt Hindrance*, to a *right Underſtanding* of the *Doctrine of True Religion*. *None of the Wicked ſhall underſtand*; *But the Wiſe ſhall underſtand*.

For the clearer Proof and Illuſtrating of which Propoſition, it may be proper to conſider diſtinctly the Two following particulars: *1ſt*, What there is in the *Nature* of *Things themſelves*; and *2dly*, What there is in the poſitive *Appointment* of *God*; which makes a *virtuous Diſpoſition* ſo great a *Help*, and a *vitious Inclination* ſo great a *Hindrance*, to a *Right Underſtanding* in *Matters of Religion*.

In the *1ſt* place, there is ſomething in the *Nature of Things themſelves*, ſomething in the very *Frame* and Conſtitution of the *Mind of Man*, ſomething in the *Nature and Tendency* of all *Religious Truths*; which helps to verify

verify the general Propoſition. In a *Mind virtuouſly diſpoſed*, there is a na- SERM.
tive *agreeableneſs* to the *Principles of True Religion*; in like manner as in a XXXVI.
healthful *Body*, the *Organs* are fitted to their proper *Objects*; and as in the
Frame of the Material *World*, every thing is ſuited and adjuſted to its proper *Uſe* and *Employment*. A *well-diſpoſed* Mind does as naturally entertain the great *Truths* of Religion, as the *Eye* diſcerns *Colours*, and the *Palate* reliſhes *Taſtes*; or as *good Ground* receives *good Seed*, and feeds and nouriſhes it till it brings forth much Fruit. It is our Saviour's own Compariſon, St. *Luke* viii. 15. *Thoſe on the* good ground *are they, who in an* honeſt and good heart, *having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience*. And in other places of Scripture, perſons of ſuch a diſpoſition, are, upon the ſame account, ſaid to be, not *ordained*, as we falſely render the Word, but *prepared* or *diſpoſed* for *eternal Life*; and that God daily added Acts xiii. 48.
to his Church, not *ſuch as* ſhould be *ſaved*, (though that alſo is true) but Acts ii. 47.
ſuch as were *ſaved*, (ſo the original Word ſignifies;) namely, ſuch as were beforehand *qualified and well inclined*, to ſave themſelves from a wicked generation, by embracing the Doctrine of the Goſpel of Chriſt. Our Saviour elſewhere calls ſuch Perſons his *Sheep, that will hear his Voice*; and ſays of Joh. x. 27. vi.
them, that they are *Drawn by* his *Father*, before they *come to* Him; that 44.
is, that by a Love to the Truth of God *in general*, they are fitted to receive that Revelation of his Will, made by the Goſpel *in particular*. In the Study of every *Human* Science, there is ſome particular previous Temper, ſome certain Prediſpoſition of Mind, which makes men fit for that particular Study, and apt to underſtand it with Eaſineſs and Delight: Generally and Principally, a *Love* to that particular Science, and a high Eſteem of its Value and Uſefulneſs. The ſame holds true in proportion, in *Religious* Matters likewiſe. A general love of Virtue; an equitable, fair, and charitable Spirit; and a juſt Senſe of the Neceſſity and Reaſonableneſs of obeying God's Commands, is the firſt Principle and Beginning of Religion; the beſt and great preparative to open the Underſtanding, to make men ſtudy with pleaſure, and comprehend with Eaſe, and judge with right Diſcernment of Divine Truths. *The Fear of the Lord*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *is the* Beginning *of Wiſdom: A good Underſtanding have all they that do his Commandments; The Praiſe thereof endureth for ever*; Pſ. cxi. 10. And *Solomon*, who in his Knowledge of the Workings of the Mind of Man, as well as in other Sciences, had no Superiour, lays down the ſame Maxim; *Prov.* i. 7; *The Fear of the Lord is the* Beginning *of Knowledge*; and repeats it again as the Foundation of all Inſtruction; ch. ix. ver. 10; *The Fear of the Lord is the* beginning *of Wiſdom*; *and the Knowledge of the Holy, is Underſtanding*. The Author of the Book of *Eccluſ.* with the variation of One Word only expreſſes likewiſe the ſame Senſe; *ch.* i. *ver.* 14, 20; *The* Root *of Wiſdom, is to fear the Lord*. The *Root*; that is to ſay, the firſt Ground and Principle, the firſt Capacity and Diſpoſition to receive Religious Truths; that which makes the *Mind* ſuſceptible and apt to apprehend them; that which makes *them* eaſy and pleaſant to be underſtood. *For Wiſdom* goeth about, Wiſ. vi. 16, 17,
ſeeking ſuch as are worthy of her; ſhe ſheweth herſelf favourably unto them in 14.
the Ways, and meeteth them in every thought: For the very true Beginning *of her, is the Deſire of Diſcipline —— And whoſo ſeeketh her early, ſhall have no great travel, for he ſhall find her ſitting at his Door.*

Further; as a *virtuous Diſpoſition of Mind* is the beſt *preparative* for *beginning* the Study of Religion; ſo *Practice and Experience* in the *courſe* of a Virtuous Life and in the Obedience of God's Commands, is in *continuance* the beſt *information* and perpetual *improvement* of a man's *Underſtanding and Judgment* in the Knowledge of Divine Truths. *He that* keepeth *the Law of the Lord, getteth the Underſtanding thereof*, ſays the wiſe Son of *Sirach*; *and the perfection of the Fear of the Lord, is Wiſdom*; Eccluſ. xxi. 11. *Evil men underſtand not judgment; but they that ſeek the Lord, underſtand all things*; Prov. xxviii. 5. He that practiſes what he knows, improves his Knowledge continually by that Practice; and by Actions, even more than by Speculation

SERM. XXXVI.

tion and Study, is the underſtanding of practical Truths inlarged. In the common Affairs of the preſent Life, it is obvious that Men of Buſineſs, Experience and Diligence, are generally much better Judges in their proper Employments, than Others who for Parts and Learning may perhaps in other reſpects be eſteemed much ſuperiour. And ſo it is likewiſe in Matters of Religion. Not the Wiſe and Crafty, not the learned and profound, not the ſubtle Arguers in Speculation and Diſpute, are the beſt Inſtructors in the Duty of a Chriſtian; but, in theſe matters, rather *the mouth of the* Juſt, (ſays *Solomon*) *bringeth forth Wiſdom, and the Lips of the* Righteous *know what is acceptable*; Prov. x. 31, 32. There is a Spirit and a Life in the Diſcourſe of a Righteous Man, proceeding from the Sincerity of an Upright Heart; which no Skill nor Art can imitate. There is a Knowledge and Diſcernment ariſing from virtuous Practice, which another man cannot learn from him that has it, but by *going* himſelf and *doing likewiſe*. The Pure in Heart ſee God *here*, as well as *hereafter*, after *another* manner, than vitious and profane Philoſophers argue about him. And as, with regard to *worldly* Employments, men of Parts and Learning can diſpute and contend about them, without underſtanding them; but Thoſe only are truly skilful, who have exerciſed themſelves in the *Practice* of the particular Employments: So in *Religion*, there is no man truly wiſe and knowing, but he that has *lived* like a Chriſtian, inſtead of diſputing about it. When ſome of the *Jews*, moved with the Wiſdom and Excellency of our Saviour's Diſcourſes, believed on him by a ſudden Impulſe of unexperienced Affection; our Saviour, knowing the Weakneſs of the Ground of their Faith, ſaid unto them, *If ye* continue *in my Word*, then —— *ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you free*; St. Joh. viii. 31; *free*, from the ſlavery of unreaſonable Luſts and Paſſions; *free*, from the Darkneſs of Ignorance and Errors. *The Wiſe* ſhall *underſtand*.

On the contrary, in the Nature of *Vicious Inclinations*, and in the Practice of *all Wickedneſs*, there is ſomething *neceſſarily repugnant*, ſomething that in the *nature of things* will be a hindrance and impediment to a right Underſtanding in matters of Religion: *None of the Wicked ſhall underſtand*. A *vicious Diſpoſition* blinds mens Eyes, corrupts their Principles, and ſubverts their Judgment; it cauſes, that men have *Eyes and ſee not, Ears and hear not, Underſtandings* and yet *do not underſtand*. They *become vain in their Imaginations*, as St. *Paul* expreſſeth it; *Rom.* i. 21: *and their fooliſh heart is darkned*. They have a *reprobate mind*; Rom. i. 28. The Word in the original ſignifies, an *injudicious mind*; a mind deſpoiled of its right Judgment, and of its natural Power of diſcerning. They have, as the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere elegantly deſcribes them, *their Underſtandings* darkned, —— *becauſe of the Blindneſs of their Hearts*. A Perſon in *this* ſtate; *the natural man*, as St. *Paul* calls him; (ſo we render the Word; 1 *Cor.* ii. 14: but it ought to be tranſlated, *the Senſual man*;) *a man wholly taken up with the Cares and Pleaſures of the preſent Life*; ſuch a one *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*, he underſtands them not, has no reliſh of them; *for they are fooliſhneſs unto him*; *neither* can *he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned*: ſpiritually *diſcerned*; *i. e.* diſcerned by *Thoſe* only, who have Faculties to diſcern them with; by *Thoſe*, whoſe Minds are not blinded with the Love of Wickedneſs. St. *John* gives us an emphatical Inſtance of This in one particular Vice, that of *Hatred and Malice*; which whoſoever is addicted to, he tells us is no more capable of underſtanding the Doctrine of the Goſpel, that Doctrine of Love and univerſal Charity, than a man whoſe Eyes are ſhut, is able to diſcern the Light: *He that hateth his Brother, is in darkneſs, and walketh in darkneſs, and knoweth not whither he goeth, becauſe that Darkneſs has blinded his Eyes*; 1 Joh. ii. 11. No Words can expreſs in a more lively and emphatical manner, than this Deſcription does, the incredible ſtupidity of ſuch Chriſtians as think they do God good Service by perſecuting one another, and expect to propagate the peaceable and charitable Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt by Arbitrarineſs, Violence and Force. And the ſame may be ſaid, in proportion, of all *other* Vices;

Eph. iv. 18.

Whoſoever

SERM. XXXVI.

Whosoever is engaged in *Any* vitious habit, he is thereby made *blind*, and *walketh in Darkness*. Our Saviour represents to us the same thing, by another the like elegant similitude; comparing vitious men to persons that are *deaf* and *cannot hear*; St. Joh. viii. 43; *Why do ye not understand my Speech? even because ye* cannot hear *my Words*; For *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father ye will do.* The meaning of this difficult Text, by comparing it with that now cited from St. *John*'s First Epistle, appears very evident. For here our Saviour in a very expressive manner describes the unfitness of the malicious *Pharisees* to receive his Doctrine, by saying that they were *deaf* and *could not hear his Words*; just as St. *John* in the other place represents the incapacity of uncharitable men to understand the Gospel, by declaring that they are *blind* and *walk in Darkness*. And when This is the Case, (as it is too plainly the Case of most Wicked men,) it is no wonder if they run into unaccountable Extravagancies. Hence, among the *Heathen*, those who *knew God*, yet *glorified him not as God*, but *changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and beasts and creeping things*; Rom. i. 21. Hence the *Jews in the* Wilderness, though they knew God not only by the Light of *Nature*, but by clear *Revelation* also; yet even *They* likewise so far corrupted themselves, as to *change their Glory, i. e.* the *True God*, whom They alone of all Nations upon the Face of the Earth had the Privilege more immediately to serve; even *They* changed this their Glory, *into the similitude of a Calf that eateth Hay*; Ps. cvi. 20. Hence the *Jews in our* Saviour's time, when they could not deny the Greatness of his Miracles, ascribed them to *Beelzebub* the Prince of Devils; and, after they had said, *Let him now come down from the Cross and we will believe him*, yet, after his Resurrection, which was a much *greater* Miracle, they still continued to disbelieve. Thus through *Blindness* it comes to pass, that *none of the Wicked* do *understand.*

But further: A Wicked disposition not only *blinds* men, and hinders them from considering, prevents their examining things, and causes them to overlook even the strongest Evidence; but it moreover *prejudites* them *Against* the Truth, and causes them even to *hate* it, and become professed *Enemies* to it. They hate *to be reformed*; and therefore *cast God's words behind them*; Ps. l. 17. Their *carnal mind is* even enmity *against God*; and therefore *is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be*; Rom. viii. 7. A person that gives them the best Advice in the World, may come to be looked upon as their *Enemy*, for that very reason, *because he tells them the Truth*; Gal. iv. 16. They will knowingly chuse and love *Darkness rather than Light, because their deeds are evil*; St. *Joh.* iii. 19. and reject the Truth for no other cause, but only because they *have* pleasure *in unrighteousness*; 2 Thess. ii. 12. And This is an effectual Reason indeed, why none of *such* wicked persons can *understand.* But where This is *not* the case, yet at least by any intervening worldly consideration, working upon their Ambition, Covetousness, or any other Passion; they will certainly be hindred from apprehending the Truth. To the Question proposed; St. *Joh.* vii. 48; *Have any of the* Rulers *or* Pharisees *believed on him?* the Answer is given; ch. xii. ver. 43; *They loved the praise of Men, more than the Praise of God*; and ch. v. 44: *How can ye believe, which receive Honour one of another, and seek not the Honour which cometh from God only?* The Jews, to *this day*, have *the Veil remaining* upon their Heart, principally through their expecting a *temporal* Messiah, to exalt them in the splendor and glory of this World: And it is too sad a Truth, that one of the principal *Hindrances* of the *Reformation* of erroneous Doctrines and Practices among Christians; such as *Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Indulgences, Prayers for the Dead*, and the like; is their being *profitable* to, and tending to promote unreasonable and unjust *Power in* those that maintain them. Where such Worldly Interests and Passions interpose, it is no wonder that Men understand not the Force even of the strongest reasoning: *They are like the deaf Adder that stoppeth her Ear; which*

2 Cor. iii. 14.

SERM. XXXVI.

refuſeth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely; Pſ. lviii. 4. There is One thing further, and not ſo commonly taken notice of, by which an *Evil Diſpoſition* hinders right Underſtanding in matters of Religion; and That is, that it promotes *contentious Diſputes* about *needleſs Intricacies*, for the ſake of Pride, Vain-glory or Profit; and in order to impoſe upon other mens Belief uncertain Opinions, which confound and darken the plaineſt Truths. Theſe St. *Paul* calls *fooliſh queſtions* —— and *contentions* —— which are *unprofitable and vain*; *ſtriving about words to no profit, but to the ſubverting of the Hearers*; *profane and vain bablings, and oppoſitions of Science falſely ſo called*, and which *will increaſe unto more ungodlineſs*; *profane and old wives fables*; *Fables and commandments of Men, that turn from the Truth*; *fooliſh and unlearned queſtions, that gender ſtrifes*; *Fables and endleſs genealogies, which miniſter queſtions rather than godly edifying*. And perſons who by Heat and Dogmaticalneſs, and by Zeal for uncertain Opinions without due inquiry and examination, cauſe or promote ſuch Contentions; he calls *proud, knowing nothing, but doting about queſtions and ſtrifes of words, whereof cometh envy, ſtrife, railings, evil ſurmiſings, perverſe diſputings of men of corrupt minds, and deſtitute of the Truth, ſuppoſing that gain is Godlineſs*; 1 Tim. vi. 4; and declares that they *have a Form* only *of Godlineſs, but deny the Power thereof*; —*reſiſting the Truth*, being *men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the Faith*; 2 Tim. iii. 5, 8. Which natural Effects of *Contentiouſneſs* and vain *Diſputes* in order to impoſe upon each other our own Opinions, are probably in great part the true reaſon from whence it comes to paſs, that *not many wiſe men after the Fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called*; *But God has choſen the fooliſh things of the world, to confound the wiſe*; *and the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty*; 1 Cor. i. 26: *Not many wiſe men after the Fleſh*; *i. e.* not many of thoſe whom *the World* generally eſteemed *wiſe*, for their being able by ſubtle diſputes to perplex and make intricate even the plaineſt Truths; but men of Integrity and Plainneſs, of Sincerity and Simplicity of Heart, men of fair and equitable Principles, univerſally charitable and Lovers of Mankind, *Theſe* were the Perſons that embraced the Goſpel of Chriſt. And this ſeems to be the Ground and Meaning of that affectionate Thankſgiving of our Saviour's; St. *Matt.* xi. 25: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent*, (that is, from the Cunning or Crafty,) *and haſt revealed them unto Babes*; (to Men of unprejudiced Plainneſs and uncorrupt Integrity;) *Even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight*: And of his declaring accordingly to his Diſciples; St. *Luke* xviii. 17; *Verily I ſay unto you, Whoſoever ſhall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little Child, ſhall in no wiſe enter therein*,

Tit. iii. 9.
2 Tim. ii 14.
1 Tim. vi. 20.
2 Tim. ii. 16.
1 Tim. iv. 7.
Tit. i. 14.
2 Tim. ii. 23.
1 Tim. i. 4.
1 Cor. iii. 18.

And thus much concerning the *firſt* general Head, namely, what there is in the *Nature* of *Things Themſelves*, which makes a vertuous *Diſpoſition* ſo great a *Help*, and a *vicious Inclination* ſo great a *Hindrance*, to a *right Underſtanding* in matters of *Religion*.

The *ſecond* thing to be conſidered, was, What there is moreover in the *poſitive Appointment* and *Conſtitution* of *God*, by which we are aſſured that *None of the Wicked ſhall underſtand, but the Wiſe* (in oppoſition to the Folly of Wickedneſs, i. e. *the Righteous*) *ſhall underſtand*. And here the Scripture declares, 1*ſt*, *in general*, that by *ſome* means or other, by ſome or *other* Method of Providence in the Government of the World, God *will* take care, that righteous and piouſly-diſpoſed perſons *ſhall* attain to *ſo much* Underſtanding as is *neceſſary* for their own particular Salvation: That *the Meek*, *God* will *guide in Judgment*; and *ſuch as are gentle, them he* will teach *his way*; Pſ. xxv. 9. That *God* will *give to a man that is* good *in his ſight, Wiſdom, and Knowledge, and Joy*; Eccleſ. ii. 26. That though *Heaven is his Throne, and Earth his Footſtool*, yet on ſuch a one he *will* vouchſafe to *look*, even on *him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at* his *Word*; Iſa. lxvi. 1, 2. That *if any man will* do *his Will, he* ſhall *know of the doctrine whether it be of God*, St. *Joh.* vii. 17. And upon *this* are founded thoſe frequent exhortations in Scripture;

ture; *Prov.* ii. 1, 5; *My Son, if thou wilt* receive *my Words, and* hide my Commandments *with thee*; —— then *shalt thou* understand *the fear of the Lord, and* find the Knowledge *of God*; — *For the Lord giveth Wisdom, — he layeth up sound Wisdom for the Righteous.* Again, *Eccluſ.* i. 26; *If thou desire Wisdom,* keep the Commandments, *and the Lord* shall give *her unto thee*; *For the Fear of the Lord is Wisdom and Instruction, and Faith and Meekneſs are his delight.* St. Jam. i. 5; *If any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, — and it* shall *be given him:* And *Epheſ.* v. 14; *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead,* (*viz.* from the Death of *Sin,*) *and Chriſt* shall give *thee Light.* St. *Paul* himſelf was a great example of this Doctrine; whom, becauſe of the ſincerity of his zeal, God was pleaſed to convert even by a Miracle: For having been ſo impoſed upon as to think that Religion could be propagated by Perſecution and Violence, he juſtly ſtiled himſelf the greateſt of Sinners. But yet for the ſincerity of his Intention, the pious Centurion *Cornelius,* was inſtructed by an Angel ſent from Heaven; and the *Ethiopian* Eunuch was taught by an Apoſtle ſent to him on purpoſe; And concerning *all* the Diſciples, when one of them asked our Lord, *How is it that thou wilt manifeſt thyſelf to Us, and not unto the World?* He replied, St. *Joh.* xiv. 23; *If a man* love *me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

But 2*dly*, The Scripture declares further *in particular*, that, by the *ſecret aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit*, God will peculiarly direct and inlighten thoſe that are truly ſincere. 1 *Joh.* ii. 20; *Ye have an Unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* Again, *Acts* v. 32; — *the Holy Ghoſt, which God has given to them that* obey *him*: — the Holy Ghoſt, who is the Spirit of *Truth*, the Spirit given firſt to the Apoſtles, and afterwards to all good men in proportion, to lead them into *all* (that is, into *all neceſſary*) *Truth.* And This, I ſuppoſe, is the meaning of thoſe paſſages of Scripture: *The froward is an abomination to the Lord; but his* Secret *is with the righteous.* Prov. iii. 32. *The* Secret *of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will ſhow them his Covenant*; Pſ. xxv. 14. And *Many are in high places, and of renown: but Myſteries are revealed unto the Meek*; Eccluſ. iii. 19.

On the contrary, where there is a *vicious Inclination* and an *Affection to Wickedneſs*; there mens minds are not only blinded by the natural conſequence of ſuch a diſpoſition, but God moreover withdraws his Spirit from them, and the Holy Ghoſt will not dwell in a Heart that takes pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs. *For into a malicious Soul Wiſdom ſhall not enter, nor dwell in the Body that is ſubject unto Sin; For the Holy Spirit of Diſcipline will flee deceit, and remove from Thoughts that are without Underſtanding, and will not abide when Unrighteouſneſs cometh in*; Wiſd. i. 4. Nay, not only ſo; but, where men are obſtinately incorrigible, God is repreſented in Scripture as juſtly giving them up *in judgment* to be *deceived* by the *Evil One*, that for a deſerved puniſhment *they may increaſe unto more Ungodlineſs*; *Rev.* xx. 8; *Satan* is deſcribed as being let *looſe*, that he may *go out to deceive the Nations*: And the deſtruction of Wicked *Ahab*, is thus eloquently repreſented in a moſt lively Image by the Prophet *Micaiah*, 1 Kings xxii. 19; *I ſaw the Lord ſitting on his throne, and all the hoſt of Heaven ſitting by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord ſaid, Who ſhall perſwade,* (in the original it is, *Who ſhall* deceive) *Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? and one ſaid on this manner, and another ſaid on that manner. And there came forth a Spirit, and ſtood before the Lord, and ſaid, I will perſwade him; And the Lord ſaid unto him, Wherewith? And he ſaid, I will go forth, and be a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets; And he ſaid, Thou ſhalt perſwade him and prevail alſo; Go forth, and do ſo.* The Repreſentation is highly figurative, and by no means to be underſtood literally; But the meaning is, that God juſtly permits Wicked men when they obſtinately refuſe to hear *Him*, he permits them to be deceived by the *Evil One* to their own deſtruction. The like expreſſion is uſed; *Judg.* ix. 23; God ſent *an Evil Spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem:* The meaning is, as it is explained in the following words, God permitted *Abimelech* to be *deceived* and *dealt treacherouſly with* by the men of *Shechem*, that his *cruelty* and the *blood* which he had ſhed might *come upon* him. 'Tis nothing more, but an acknowledgment of the Juſtice

and

SERM. XXXVI.

and Wiſdom of Providence, in ſuffering Wicked men to be judicially blinded, that they may fall according to their deſerts. *With him is Strength and Wiſdom, the Deceived and Deceiver are his*; ---- *He removeth away the Speech of the Truſty, and taketh away the Underſtanding of the Aged* from them; *Job* xii. 16, 20. The Heathen World, becauſe they did *not like to retain God in their Knowledge*, therefore *God gave them up* to *Uncleanneſs*, and to *vile affections*, and to *a reprobate* (*i. e.* an *undiſcerning*) *mind*; Rom. i. 24, 26, 28. *Joſh.* xi. 20. *Deut.* ii. 30. *Pharoah*, becauſe of his obſtinate Wickedneſs, *God hardned his Heart*, i. e. ſuffered his underſtanding to be more and more blinded, that he ſhould not *ſee* the Tendency of God's wonderful Judgments worked in *Egypt*. The ſame Phraſe is uſed of the people of the Jews; *Iſ.* lxiii. 17; *Thou haſt* hardned *our Heart from thy Fear*; or, as it is, ch. vi. 10; Make *the Heart of this people* fat, ---- *leſt they underſtand with their Heart, and convert and be healed.* The *Meaning* is expreſſed at large; ch. xxix. 13, 10; *Foraſmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth*, ---- *but have removed their Heart far from me*; Therefore, *behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people*; — *The Wiſdom of their Wiſe men ſhall periſh, and the Underſtanding of their prudent men ſhall be hid*; — *The Lord has poured out upon you the*
Rom. xi. 8. *Spirit of deep ſleep, and has cloſed your eyes.* And *Ezek.* xiv. 5, 6, 9; *Becauſe they are all eſtranged from me by their Idols*, Therefore *ſay unto the houſe of Iſrael*, — *If a prophet be deceived when he has ſpoken a thing*; *I the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will ſtretch out my hand upon him, and will deſtroy him from the midſt of my people Iſrael.* The like Expreſſions are uſed in the *New Teſtament*, concerning corrupt
Rev. xxii. 11. *Chriſtians*; *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill*; *and he which is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill*; *and he that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill*; *and he that is holy, let*
Rev. xvii. 17. *him be holy ſtill.* And *God ſhall* put *it into their hearts to deliver their Kingdom and Power unto the Beaſt.* And 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 10; *Becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth*, — *for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong Deluſion, that they ſhould believe a Lye*; *That they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs*: And 2 *Tim.* iii. 13; *Evil men and ſeducers ſhall wax worſe and worſe, deceiving and being deceived.* All which paſſages, are as it were Paraphraſes and Illuſtrations of the Words of the Text; *None of the Wicked ſhall underſtand, but the Wiſe ſhall underſtand.*

From what has been ſaid, we may *infer*, 1*ſt*, That *Wicked* men have no *reaſon to complain*, for their not being able to *underſtand* Religion; and *Infidels* no *Excuſe*, for their not *believing* it. *For God who commanded the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs, hath ſhined in our Hearts, to give the light of the Knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*: *But if our Goſpel be hid, 'tis hid to them that are loſt*; *In whom the God of this World has blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them*; 2 Cor. iv. 6, 3, 4.

2*dly*, From hence appears the Reaſon of our Saviour's ſpeaking ſo much in Parables. To the *Wiſe* and well-diſpoſed, it was *given to know the Myſtery of the Kingdom of God*; *but to others* (*i. e.* to the *Wicked*) he ſpake *in Parables, that ſeeing they might not ſee, and hearing they might not underſtand*: And thence our Saviour ſo frequently at the end of his Parables cried out; *He that has Ears to hear, let him hear*; and, *He that can receive it, let him receive it.* And *he that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.*

3*dly*, From what has been ſaid, we may obſerve, how it comes to paſs, that *Faith*, which is generally looked upon as an Act of the *Underſtanding*, and ſo not in our own Power, is yet in the *New Teſtament* always required and inſiſted upon as a *Moral Virtue*. The reaſon is becauſe *Faith*, in the Scripture-ſenſe, is not barely an Act of the *Underſtanding*, but a mixt Act of the *Will* alſo; conſiſting very much in that *Simplicity and Unprejudicedneſs* of Mind which our Saviour calls *receiving the Kingdom of God as a little child*; in that freedom from *guile and deceit*, which was the character of *Nathaniel*, an *Iſraelite* indeed; and in that *teachable Diſpoſition* or *Deſire to know the Will of God*, for which the *Bereans* were ſo highly commended, who *ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things* the Apoſtle taught, *were ſo or not.* They are commended for not believing on the *Authority* even of the Apoſtles. But

4*thly*,

4*thly*, From hence it appears, that there is no need of an *Infallible Guide on Earth*, or of an *unerring Church*. For all necessary Truth is sufficiently made known in Scripture; and one great part of our Christian Duty, is to *study* the Will of God with such a Disposition of Mind, as may entitle us to the Promise given in the Text, that *the Wise* shall *understand*. SERM. XXXVI.

5*thly* and *Lastly*, Yet This must be so understood, as to be a Security, not against *All*, but against *Fatal Mistakes*. The best and piousest persons, may in many things *err*; but their *Errors* cannot be dangerous, or of final ill consequence: For in things absolutely necessary to Salvation, the *Wicked* only can be void of Understanding. *None of the Wicked shall understand; But the Wise shall understand.*

SERMON XXXVII.

The Practice of Morality leads to the Practice of the Goſpel.

JOH. vi. 44.

No man can come to Me, except the Father which has ſent Me, draw him.

SERM. XXXVII.

THE *Duty* and *Happineſs* of rational Creatures, is the Practice of Righteouſneſs and true Virtue, founded upon a Belief of the Being and Government of God; whoſe *Kingdom* over rational Creatures conſiſts, in the conformity of their Wills and Actions to the Nature and Life of God; each in their ſeveral Stations, according to the Degree of Light and Knowledge which they injoy, indeavouring to approve themſelves to him by a chearful obedience to his Commands; and conſtantly promoting the Great Ends of his Government by preſerving the Harmony of the *Moral* World, in like manner as the Wiſdom

SERM. XXXVII.

Wiſdom of his Government over the *Natural and Material* World is ſhown forth in the regularity of all its Motions. By *Sin*, Moral Agents oppoſe and bring diſorder into this Kingdom of God; which the inferiour part of the Creation, having no Liberty of Choice, is not capable of doing. And they who thus oppoſe God's Kingdom of righteouſneſs, become thereby *Enemies* to God, and alienated from his Favour. Nevertheleſs, man being a frail and fallible Creature, liable to be ſeduced, tempted and deceived; and there being, in the caſe of moſt Sinners, many Circumſtances to excite Pity and Compaſſion; therefore Gods does not immediately caſt them off, but generally allows them Space and Time for Repentance. And for this very End did he ſend his Son, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, into the World; that, inviting men to Repentance, declaring to them more diſtinctly the Malignity of Sin, giving them the fulleſt Aſſurances of Pardon (upon their real and ſincere Amendment) through the Merit of his own once offering himſelf a Sacrifice for ever, and revealing to them more clearly the Certainty of a future Judgment, and the Rewards and Puniſhments of the Life to come, he might by theſe means reduce them to the Obedience of God's Commands, and conſequently reſtore them to the Divine Favour. *Chriſt has once ſuffered for Sins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God*; 1 Pet. iii. 18. And Col. i. 21; *You that were ſometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his Fleſh through death, to preſent you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his Sight.* But then we muſt here carefully obſerve, that in like manner as God *originally* and *from the Beginning*, while the *inanimate* world obeys him abſolutely and by neceſſity of Nature, would not compel the Obedience of *rational* Creatures by the irreſiſtibleneſs of his Power, but exacted it only from the willing Compliance of their own Choice; ſo *now likewiſe* in the *reſtoration* of men *by Chriſt*, he will have no one reduced to his obedience by *Force*, but by ſuch Motives as work properly upon rational Agents, *Reaſon* and *Arguments*, *Promiſes* and *Threatnings*, *Hopes* and *Fears*. Thus in the Old Teſtament; *I taught Ephraim to go*, ſays God by the Prophet, *taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them; I drew them with Cords of a man, with bands of Love, and I was to them as they that take off the yoke*; Hoſ. xi. 3: And in the Goſpel; *No man*, ſays our Saviour in the words of the Text, can *come to Me, except the Father, which has ſent me*, draw *him*: No man can be a worthy Diſciple of *Chriſt*, if he has not firſt upon his mind a due ſenſe of *God*. No man can be a ſincere Follower of the *Son* of God, who is not in a diſpoſition of being *drawn* to a Love of Virtue, and of being *prevailed upon* to practiſe Righteouſneſs, by a Senſe of the *Goodneſs* and *Reaſonableneſs* and *Excellency* of the eternal Laws of *God*, even the *Father*, who ſent him.

For the clearer and more diſtinct explication of which doctrine, and of our Lord's full Meaning and Intention in theſe words; it will be proper to conſider particularly,

Firſt, What is meant by the Phraſe of *Coming to Chriſt*: No Man can *Come to Me*, except *the Father, which has ſent me, draw him*. *Some* enthuſiaſtick perſons, judging of the Senſe of this Phraſe merely from the conceptions of their own imagination, and not from its *Uſe* and clear Signification in *other* paſſages of the ſame Writings; (which indeed is the only poſſible way of Underſtanding the true meaning either of Scripture, or of any book whatſoever:) and *Others* negligently following *Their* Interpretation, have ſuppoſed that *Coming to Chriſt* means a *relying* or *depending* upon *His Merits* and *Satisfaction*, to bring them to Salvation, whether they obey his Commandments by a virtuous Courſe of Life, or no. But whoever conſiders the many Paſſages of Scripture, in which this expreſſion is to be met with, cannot fail to obſerve, that it really ſignifies quite another thing; *Heb.* xi. 6. *He that* cometh to God, *muſt believe that he Is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek. him*: *Coming to God* here evidently expreſſes the ſame thing, *as diligently ſeeking him*: And, *diligently ſeeking him*, is the ſame as ſincerely deſiring to *know and obey his Will*, in order to *pleaſe* him. Again, *ch.* vii. 25. Chriſt *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt them that* come unto God by him, *ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them*: *Coming unto* God *by Chriſt*, is, Sinners returning by Repentance and Real Amendment to the Obedience of God's Commands,

SERM. XXXVII.

mands, in hopes of obtaining pardon for what is paſt, through the interceſſion of Chriſt. In like manner therefore, *Coming unto* Chriſt, ſignifies alſo *ſerving and obeying* Him, *becoming* his *Diſciples*, *believing* his *Doctrine*, and *living according to it*, ſincerely deſiring to *underſtand and practiſe* his *Will*; Joh. vi. 35: *He that* cometh to me, *ſhall never hunger*; he that believes and obeys the Goſpel, ſhall never want any thing neceſſary towards his obtaining eternal Life. And thus likewiſe in the words of the Text; *No man* can come to Me, No Man can be a worthy diſciple of Chriſt, no Man can be a true and ſincere Chriſtian; *except the Father which has ſent me, draw him.* And This is the

Second thing to be conſidered in the Text; the meaning of theſe *latter* words, *except the Father, which has ſent me, draw him.* Which expreſſion, many Writers in Divinity have ſo underſtood, as if thereby was ſignified, that no man had it in his own Power to become a good Chriſtian, or to perform any good Action; but that every Act of Virtue, was operated or produced in him by the immediate Power of God. And thus much of Truth there *is* indeed in That Notion; that neither in any *religious*, nor in any *natural* action, does any one perform any thing, but by a Power freely given him from, and entirely depending upon, the good pleaſure of God. *In Him*, and by virtue of Powers and Faculties continually depending *upon* him, we *live and move, and have our Being*, and perform all, even the *natural* Actions of Life. In the execution of Civil *Power and* Authority, or of any *Office* whatſoever there is ſtill further, not only a continual dependance upon the Will of God for the uſe of men's *natural Faculties*; but moreover a dependance upon God's general Providence in the Government of the World, to order things ſo, as that the *Authority*, whatever it is, may actually take place: Thus *Pilate* could have had *no Power* to judge or condemn our Lord, or any other perſon, except it were *given him from above*; Joh. xix. 11. And the *Baptiſt* in This ſenſe well expreſſes the *Succeſs* of his own Miniſtry, *A man can receive nothing*, ſays he; *Joh.* iii. 27; *except it be given him from Heaven.* In *religious* matters ſtill further, it is *not only* true, that *it is God who giveth us both to will and to do of his good Pleaſure*; that it is God from whom alone we receive the *rational Faculties*, or *Powers*, both of *chuſing* and *acting*, but *moreover*, that it is owing to his ſuperabundant *grace* and *favour*, to his *free Gift and undeſerved Bounty in Chriſt*, that he has afforded us the *Benefit* of a *Revelation*, the *Advantage* of a clearer and more *expreſs* declaration of his *Will*, the *Aſſiſtances* of his *Holy Spirit*, an *Authoritative Aſſurance* of *Pardon* upon *Repentance*, and a more *complete Diſcovery* of the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* in the *future* State, than could be obtained by the bare Light of Nature. All This, I ſay, is unqueſtionably true; and ought to be continually and thankfully acknowledged, with a juſt and humble ſenſe of our Dependance upon God in every thing that we Are, or Do. But it is *not* the Meaning of the *Text* before us, nor what our Saviour is at all here ſpeaking of in this whole Diſcourſe. For where any one is exhorting men to *act*, and preſſing them to *perform their Duty*; it is not *there* a *proper Argument or Incitement to Diligence*, (though it is undoubtedly in itſelf a certain Truth,) to tell them they can do nothing at all, unleſs God give them Power; but the *proper Motive* is to aſſure them, that becauſe God *has* actually given them *Power*, therefore he *expects* and *requires* it of them, that they ſhould *act* accordingly. Thus St. *Paul* argues to the *Philippians*; ch. ii. 12. *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.* The meaning plainly is; God *has given* you Power to chuſe and act, *therefore* work out your own Salvation. And for the ſame reaſon, when our Saviour, in the Text, tells the unbelieving *Jews*, by way of *Reproof* for their obſtinate Infidelity, and not by way of *pitying* them for any Want of Power to do their Duty; when he tells them (I ſay) by way of *Reproof* for their unreaſonable Infidelity, that *no man* can *come to* Him, *except the Father draw him*; it is very certain he does not by theſe words mean to expreſs any *Act* of *God* upon *Them*, but ſome certain *affection* or *diſpoſition* of *Theirs* with regard to *God.*

For the further clearing of which explication of our Lord's ſenſe, it is to be obſerved in the general nature of language, that when *Any Perſon* or *Thing* is ſaid to *draw* another, the word (*draw*) may with equal propriety of Speech, ſignify either the *Action* of *Him* who *draws* the Other, or the *Action* of the *Other* who is *drawn* by him. And that, both in Scripture and in vulgar language, it *much*

more

more *frequently* ſignifies the Action of Him who *is drawn*, than of Him who *draws*; will appear moſt evidently, and beyond All contradiction, from the following conſiderations. Our Saviour diſcourſing with the *Jews*; *Joh.* xii. 32: *And I*, ſays he, *if I be lifted up from the Earth, will* draw *all men unto me*: His meaning clearly is, not to expreſs any *Act* of *his Own upon Men*; but that, after his crucifixion, many nations and people, convinced by the Excellency of his doctrine, and by the Miracles it was attended with, ſhould by *their own Will and Act* embrace his Religion. In like manner when God by the Prophet declared concerning the *Iſraelites* of old; *Jer.* xxxi. 3. *With loving Kindneſs have I* drawn *thee*; and *Hoſ.* xi. 4. *I* drew *them with Cords of a man, with Bands of Love*; every one ſees the Meaning to be This only, that the conſideration of the kindneſs and love of God, ſhown forth to the *Iſraelites* in ſo many eminent Inſtances of Mercy, was a very ſtrong reaſon to prevail with them to obey and ſerve him cheerfully. The ſenſe is the very ſame, as in that of St. *Paul*; 2 *Cor.* v. 14; *The Love of Chriſt* conſtraineth *us*; which is a ſtronger expreſſion than that of *drawing* us: *The Love of Chriſt*, ſays he, *conſtrains* or *compels* us, —— *that we ſhould not henceforth live unto ourſelves, but unto Him who died for us, and roſe again.* A ſenſe of *Gratitude*, *draws* Us; Acts of *Kindneſs*, *Love* and *Good-will*, from One *Perſon* to another, do very ſtrongly *draw* men; The *Beauty* and *Excellency*, the *Goodneſs* and *uſefulneſs* of *Things*, *draws* or perſwades them: We are *drawn*, by *Arguments* and *Reaſons*, by *Promiſes* and *Threatnings*, by *Hopes* and *Fears*; Yet it is not that *theſe things* are *Agents*, but that *we* ourſelves *act*, when we are ſaid to *be drawn* by them. Much after the ſame manner of ſpeaking, Men are ſaid to be *moved* (or drawn) with *compaſſion*; Matt. ix. 36: *moved* with *indignation*; Matt. xx. 24: *moved* with *Envy*; Acts vii. 9: *moved* with *Fear*; Heb. xi. 7. And when St. *Paul* had reckoned up the things which are generally apt to affect Men moſt ſtrongly, yet *None* of theſe *things* (ſays he) move *Me*; Acts xx. 24. After the ſame manner, in the *Ill* ſenſe of the word, Men are deſcribed to be drawn *away with their own* Luſt, *and enticed*; Jam. i. 14: and *David* is repreſented as having been moved *by* Satan *to number the People*; 2 Sam. 24. 1. And yet neither the one nor the other expreſſion were at all intended to ſignify, that the *things done* were not the perſons *Own Acts*. Directly on the contrary; the Scripture plainly means, ſeverely to *blame* the One, *acting* upon the incitement of *Luſt*; and the Other, for *acting* upon the Suggeſtions of the *Devil*. Thus therefore in the *Text* likewiſe, when our Lord ſays, *No man can come to Me, except the Father, which has ſent me*, draw *him*; it is reaſonable and neceſſary to underſtand him as ſpeaking, not concerning any *Act* of *God* upon *men*, but concerning the *Affection* which *Some men* bear towards *God*. For as it is not a *misfortune*, but a *Vice*, for a Man to be *drawn away* by his own *Luſt*, and enticed; and St. *Peter*'s expoſtulation with *Ananias*; *Why hath* Satan *filled thine heart*, is not by way of *Excuſe*, but by way of *aggravating* his crime: So neither on the *other* ſide, is it any declaration of *Fate*, but a high commendation of Men's *Virtue*, to ſay that they were *drawn* to their Duty, or prevailed with to perform it, by conſideration of *God*. Indeed, *without* conſideration of *God*, without a continual *View* and *Regard* towards *Him*, as Governing the World, there *can* be no ſuch thing as *True Virtue*: No man *can* become a *true and good Chriſtian*, without firſt having a Senſe of the original *natural* obligation he lies under, of *Love and Duty* towards *God*: *No man can come to Me; except the Father, who has ſent me, draw him.* And *This* ſenſe of the phraſe, our *Saviour himſelf* confirms by the words immediately following: For ſo he expreſly adds in the very *next* verſe; *Every man that hath* heard, *and hath* learned *of the Father, cometh unto Me*; Every one that has a juſt ſenſe, and ſuitable Practice, of *natural* Religion towards *God*; will be diſpoſed readily to embrace the Doctrine of *Chriſt*.

There is *another* expreſſion very frequent in Scripture, which may help much to illuſtrate the manner of ſpeaking in the Text. The ſame Diſciples of Chriſt, who are here ſaid to be *drawn* to him by the Father, are elſewhere frequently deſcribed as being *given* to him of God; *Heb.* ii. 13; *I, and the children whom God has* given *me*. And again; *Joh.* xvii. 2; *Thou haſt given him power over all fleſh, that he ſhould give eternal life to as many as thou haſt* given *him*. Now that even *This phraſe* does not denote any *Action* of *God* upon *men*, but merely the *character* or

SERM. XXXVII.

qualifications of the persons described; is apparent from the *parallel* places of Scripture. *All that the Father* giveth *me*; Joh. vi. 37, are, in the 40th verse; *every one which seeth the Son, and* believeth *on him*: And they *to whom* it is not given *of the Father* to *come to Christ*; ver. 65. are they whom, in the *verse before*, our Lord reproves for their *unreasonable obstinacy* in *not believing*. And when in his Prayer to the Father; ch. xvii. 12, he says, *those that thou* gavest *me, I have kept, and none of them is lost*, but *the Son of perdition*, it is plain by That exception, that *Judas* was originally one of those, whom God had *given* to Christ, in the same sense as he *gave* him the rest of his Disciples; and yet afterwards, by his own Fault, by becoming a Son of Treachery, *i. e.* a wicked and traiterous person, he ceased to be of that number. Just as, in *Acts* xxvii. 24; *God had* given to St. *Paul all those that sailed with him*; and yet he declares, ver. 31; *Except these* abide *in the ship, ye cannot be saved*.

By a not much unlike figure of Speech, such persons as *voluntarily* undertake extraordinary Difficulties *for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake*; Matt. xix. 12; are, in the *verse before*, stiled *those to whom it is* given. And, *It is* given *unto you*, says our Lord to his Disciples; *ch.* xiii. 11; *to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*; because *seeing*, ye *see*; (that is, ye see without Prejudice;) and *hearing*, ye *hear and understand*; ver. 13. And concerning those of a *contrary* Disposition, the Scripture says that they are *blinded*; that God *hath given them eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear*; nay, that God *sends them strong Delusion*. And *Moses*, in a most affectionate manner of expostulation, complains of the *Israelites*; *Deut.* xxix. 4; that after all the *Great* things that their *eyes had seen, the Signs of those Great Miracles, yet the* Lord *had not given them an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, even unto That day*. Nothing is more evident, than that the meaning of these Complaints is, not that *God* was *wanting in his assistance*, much less that he actually *operated upon men* to make them *stupidly and ungratefully wicked*; but that, through their *own* Obstinacy and Perverseness, the Means which *God* had been pleased to make use of to reclaim them, had always proved ineffectual; and all the great and marvellous things which he had done for them in *Egypt* and in the Wilderness, had not prevailed with them to repent, had not *drawn* them (as our Saviour in the Text expresses it) to the Obedience expected of them. And the same thing may in the like sense too justly be said at this day, concerning many among *Us*. God has by a long series of very marvellous Events delivered *Us* from That greatest of All Temporal calamities, the establishment of Popery and Arbitrary Power, by which Other Great (and (in other respects) Wise nations have been reduced under the vilest Indignities of the most irrational and inhuman Slavery: And yet *the Lord hath not given us an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, even unto This Day*.

From what has been said in explication of the phrases made use of in the Text, the general *Doctrine* it contains is plainly this; that no man can *become* a true Disciple of *Christ*, who is not affected with a sincere Love of *God and Virtue*; Nor can any one who *already professes* the Name of Christ, behave himself as becomes that Holy Profession, by Any other Methods or Forms of Religion whatsoever, than by the Practice of Righteousness and true Virtue, in Obedience to the moral Commands of God. When our Saviour had worked the Miracle of the Loaves, recorded in the Beginning of This chapter; many of the *Jews* believed on him; that is, they professed themselves his Disciples, not out of any regard to the Excellency and Holiness of his Doctrine, but in hopes of being supported by him in the World. To these persons he says, ver. 26; *Ye seek me, not because ye saw the Miracles, but because ye did eat of the Loaves, and were filled: Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for That meat which endureth unto everlasting life.* This Doctrine when they relished not, but began to *murmur*; he reproves them with somewhat *more earnestness* in the words of the Text; *No man* can *come to Me, except the Father, which has sent me, draw him*: It is in vain to profess to be my Disciples upon any other foot, than that of Regard to *God*, and to *the World to come*. Upon which when they murmured still more, *ver.* 61; he replied again, *ver.* 64, *There are some of you that believe not*; —— therefore *said I unto you, that no man* can *come to Me, except it were given unto him of my Father: Given unto him of*

my

my Father; that is, in the *same* sense, as he elsewhere tells the *Apostles* that it was given to them *to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*, because they were unprejudiced, willing to *hear* and to *understand*; and came to him, not upon any *temporal* Design, but being perswaded (as St. *Peter* expresses himself; *ver.* 68 of this chapter) that he *had the words of eternal Life*. SERM. XXXVII.

Upon account of the necessary and inseparable connexion of *these Two* things; of a steady *Regard* to the *eternal* obligations of the *moral law* of God, in every one who professes to embrace the *Revelation* of Christ; upon This account (I say) it is, that our Lord declares, *Joh.* vii. 16, 17. *My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me; If any man will do* His *will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* And again, *ch.* viii. 42; *If* God, says he, *were your Father, ye would love* Me; *for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.* Like to which, is that of the Apostle St. *John*; 1 *Joh.* ii. 13; *I write unto you little children, because ye have known the Father*; ver. 24; *If that which ye have heard from the beginning, shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.* 2 Joh. 9; *He that abideth in the* doctrine, (that is, he that *obeys the Laws*) *of Christ*, he *hath both the Father and the Son.* On the contrary, to the immoral and hypocritical *Pharisees*, who hated the doctrine of Virtue and Righteousness; *Ye neither know* me, says our Lord, *nor my* Father; *Joh.* viii. 19. And, speaking of the persecutions which the vicious and debauched World would bring upon his disciples; *These Things*, says he, *will they do unto you, because they know not him that sent me*; Joh. xv. 21. *They have both seen and hated both* Me *and my* Father; ver. 24. *And these things will they do unto* you, *because they have not known the* Father, *nor* Me; *ch.* xvi. 3. that is, they have no true Sense, either of *natural* Religion, or *revealed*.

The Sum therefore and application of the Whole, is This: The Great End and Design of the Gospel of Christ, is to restore Sinners to the Favour of *God*, by bringing them back to the Practice of *True Virtue*. Vicious and corrupt Minds therefore, who are enemies to the *Moral Laws* of God, *must* always naturally be averse to the Doctrine of the *Gospel*. Consequently such persons are very apt, either to oppose and persecute the true Disciples of Christ, or else, if in times of Prosperity they themselves embrace the Profession of Christianity, they always place their Religion in outward Forms and Ceremonies, or in certain Systems of opinion, consistent with unrighteous practice. For to a True Sense of Christ's Religion *no man* can *come, except the Father draw him*, that is, except the love of God and Virtue be his Motive.

SERMON

SERMON XXXVIII.

The Character of a Good Man.

GEN. xviii. 19.

For I know Him, that he will command his children, and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment.

SERM. XXXVIII.

THESE words are part of the character, which God himſelf, in different places of the Old Teſtament, has given of that Great and Good Man, the Patriarch *Abraham*. And they are ſpoken in this place, as a ground or reaſon of the great and laſting Bleſſings which God declared he intended to confer upon him. Ver. 18; *Abraham ſhall ſurely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the Earth ſhall be bleſſed in Him: For I know Him, that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham, that which he hath ſpoken of him.* Upon account of This character, and the Bleſſings conſequent upon it, he is elſewhere ſtiled in Scripture *The Friend of God*, and the *Father of all them that believe*. And in the book of *Eccleſiaſticus*; ch. xliv. 19; his hiſtory is thus briefly and elegantly ſummed up: *Abraham was a great Father of*

many

many people, in glory was there none like unto him: Who kept the Law of the moſt High, and was in covenant with him; he eſtabliſhed the Covenant in his fleſh, and, when he was proved, he was found faithful: Therefore he aſſured him by an Oath, that he would bleſs the nations in his Seed, and that he would multiply him as the Duſt of the Earth, and exalt his Seed as the Stars, and cauſe them to inherit from Sea to Sea, and from the River unto the utmoſt part of the Land.

The *Virtues*, upon account whereof theſe great Bleſſings were promiſed to *Abraham*, were *perſonal*: But the *Bleſſings themſelves*, 'tis evident, were, with regard to *Him*, *figurative* only; being fulfilled not till ſome *hundreds* of years *after*, upon his *Poſterity*; whereas *He himſelf* did but ſojourn *in the land of Promiſe, as in a ſtrange country*, and *confeſſed that he was a Stranger and Pilgrim on the Earth*. From whence the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* very juſtly infers, That *Abraham* underſtood the promiſed Bleſſing with regard to *Himſelf*, to be of a *ſpiritual* and *better* kind. Ch. xi. 14, 16, 10; *For they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a country*; a *better country, that is, an heavenly*; *For he looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.*

The *particular* Virtue which procured to *Abraham* the character given him in my Text, was his *keeping the way of the Lord*, that is, his adhering to the *Belief* and *Worſhip* of the *One True God of the Univerſe*, in oppoſition to the general corruption of the idolatrous Nations among whom he lived; and his *commanding his children and his houſhold after him*, to do the like. 'Twas his exemplarily putting in Practice, what *Joſhua* publickly declared before all the tribes of *Iſrael*, that *He* alſo would do in the like caſe: Ch. xxvi. 15; *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe ye this day whom ye will ſerve; whether the Gods which your Fathers ſerved that were on the other ſide of the flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whoſe land ye dwell: But as for Me and my Houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* In the *New Teſtament*, This practice is ſtiled, [νικᾶν ἐκ τοῦ θηρίου,] *Rev.* xv. 2; not (as we render the words,) *getting the victory* over *the Beaſt*; but, *getting the victory* (or *overcoming*) *from* out of the midſt *of the Beaſt*; That is, adhering ſtedfaſtly to the *True Religion*, in the *midſt of* idolatrous and corrupt Nations.

The Great and Principal Deſign of every man's life, ought to be the promoting the Glory of God; the encouraging of Virtue, and diſcouraging every kind of Vice. Not that any man is obliged to be perpetually employed in actions that are *immediately* of a religious nature; or that all his Thoughts and Diſcourſes are to be wholly confined to things *Sacred*: But that his Principal and Final Aim, his General and Conſtant View, the ſettled Temper and Diſpoſition of his Mind, and the Habitual Tendency of all his Actions, be the eſtabliſhing of Truth and Right in the World. And when once a man has habitually fixt to himſelf this Great End, and it is become (as it were) his Natural Temper; When he is *transformed* (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it) *by the renewing of his Mind*, and his *Meat and Drink* (as our Saviour ſpeaks concerning himſelf) is to *do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven*: This Love of Goodneſs, will naturally, like all *Other Habits*, influence even the moſt *common* actions of his life: Even when he is not actually thinking of it, but employed perhaps in the moſt *vulgar* affairs, or even in *diverſions themſelves*; yet ſtill *every thing* he does, will habitually have ſomewhat in it, tending to promote a general ſenſe of Truth and Equity, a general Regard to God and Virtue. And *whatever* his *particular* State, Relation, or Circumſtances of Life be; he will particularly apply the proper Advantages and Opportunities, wherewith That State or Thoſe Circumſtances more peculiarly furniſh him, to promote the ſame Ends of Virtue and Goodneſs.

As a *Magiſtrate* or *Governour*, he will take care that That Weight, and Power of *influencing* Others, which the Superiority of his Station gives to his *Example*, ſhall be directed conſtantly to the Intereſt of Virtue. In the *execution of Laws*, (in which matter there is room for great variety of Prudent or Imprudent exerciſe of Power,) he will always endeavour to put the *Streſs* of Authority, upon urging men to *do* thoſe things which will really make them *better*, and *deterring* them from ſuch Practices as are intrinſically in their own nature *evil* or *vicious*; That ſo the Laws of *God* and *Man* may uniformly promote one and the ſame End, *for the Puniſhment only of Evil doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well*: And with regard to

SERM. XXXVIII.

Ambition, or the Increaſe of his own *Power and Dominion*; he will take much more pleaſure in being able to be *publickly beneficial* to Mankind, by maintaining their juſt Rights and Properties; than in obtaining to *Himſelf* Power, for Power's ſake.

Again: A perſon of This diſpoſition, if he be in his ſtation a *Preacher* of the *Goſpel*; he will not have in his View the *temporal* Grandeur of any particular *Sect* or *Party* of Men; but will always endeavour to ſet before Men the Truth of God in That native *Simplicity*, and repreſent to them the religion of Chriſt (in the manner our Lord himſelf repreſented it) to be ſuch a *reaſonable* Service, as that it may effectually *convince* the Minds of Gainſayers, and, by the irreſiſtible Force of Truth and Reaſon, compel them to ſubmit themſelves to the Obedience of Chriſt. And above all things he will take care to give evidence in his whole behaviour, that He *himſelf* ſincerely believes and expects That Judgment to come, which he ſets forth to *Others* as the Great Argument that muſt oblige them to embrace the Truths and to obey the Precepts of the Goſpel; According to That direction of our Saviour; *Let your Light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* If he lives in a *corrupt* and degenerate *Age*, he will *principally* ſet himſelf, with all meekneſs and gentleneſs, to oppoſe the *particular corruptions* of the Age he lives in; endeavouring by all fair and righteous methods, to bring as Many as poſſible to the acknowledgment of the Truth.

Laſtly, Such a perſon, if he be in the capacity of a *Father* or *Maſter of a Family*, will take all proper occaſions to inſtil right notions of Truth and Virtue, into thoſe over whom the Circumſtances of his State and Relation naturally give him an Influence. And by his *Private* Example, ſhowing in his moſt free and retired converſation, that he has conſtantly upon his mind That *Real* Regard to God and Virtue, which 'tis more eaſy and uſual to make Show of in Publick; he will with great efficacy promote the True Honour of God, and the advancement of ſincere Religion. For, *formal Admonitions* and *Publick Declarations* concerning Matters *of Religion*, are apt to be of very ſmall Force, either towards fixing in the *Mind Right Principles*, or forming in the *Manners* a Habit *of virtuous Practice*; if in the *private* life and converſation of thoſe by whom Families are to be directed, there appear Prophaneneſs and Impiety, or Lewdneſs and Debauchery, or tyrannical Oppreſſiveneſs and violent and unreaſonable Paſſions. How affectionate ſoever the exhortations of the Preachers of the Goſpel be, and how often ſoever repeated inſtructions be given to young perſons either in Schools or otherwiſe; yet if the Examples they find at home in the Practice of common Life, be vitious, debauched, and altogether contrary to the Precepts and Admonitions given them in Form; the effect of all ſuch inſtruction cannot but be, comparatively ſpeaking, very inconſiderable. Nor is there any other *poſſible* way, by which there can be any Hope that the arguments of Religion ſhould come to have their due Weight, and *general* Efficacy in the World; unleſs They, whoſe State, Relation, and Circumſtances, give them a Natural Influence over Many, will ſhow in the whole courſe of their private converſation, and in the freeſt and moſt retired part of common Life, that they have really upon their Minds a Senſe and Concern for Religion; that they have habitually in all their Actions a conſtant Regard to God, and a ſincere Deſire to promote the Knowledge of Truth and the Practice of Virtue and Goodneſs amongſt Men. This was the Temper of *Abraham*; Upon account of which, That Great Character is given him in the Text, with a *repeated* Aſſurance of the Bleſſings deſigned him: *I know Him, that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham, That which he hath ſpoken of him.*

The words, *He will* Command *his children and his houſhold after him*, ſeem to imply, as if it was in *Abraham*'s power to *undertake* for thoſe that were to come after him, *what* they ſhould do; and as if *They* were originally under an *obligation* to *perform* what he ſhould require of them. Which in *general*, 'tis evident, cannot be true: Becauſe then it would follow, that All *Other* Heads of Families had the ſame Authority likewiſe; and conſequently, the poſterity of *every* Family, lying under the *ſame* obligation, would be under a neceſſity, where-ever any *Falſe* religion prevailed, to continue for ever in the profeſſion of ſuch falſe Religion:

Directly

Directly contrary to *Abraham*'s *own* Practice, who, being born among an idolatrous and corrupt people, *gat him out from his country, and from his kindred, and from his Father's houſe*; Gen. xii. 1. Neither, where the *Truth itſelf* prevails, is it ſufficient that Thoſe who come after, follow it barely upon the *Command* of thoſe who went before: Becauſe, tho' it be indeed, by Chance, the *Truth* only, which they follow; yet, They not knowing it to be ſo, but following it merely upon ſuch a principle, as would equally have made them follow Any *Error*, 'tis with regard to the Morality of *Their* Act, the very ſame thing as if they were *not* in the Truth. But in *Some* particular Caſes, and with regard to *ſome* particular things, ſuch Circumſtances there *may* be, as may make it very reaſonable for Parents and Governours to Command *their children and their houſhold after them*; and very reaſonable for *Theſe*, to be under the ſtricteſt Obligation to *obey* ſuch Commands. Where things are in their own nature abſolutely and *confeſſedly* indifferent, there the Command of proper Superiours is manifeſtly the *Only Rule of* Action. On the other ſide; where things are already made neceſſary by a ſuperiour Obligation, as where there is a clear and expreſs command of *God*; or where things are *intrinſically and eſſentially obligatory* in their own nature, as is the *Study of Truth with Sincerity and Impartiality*, and the *Practice of all moral and eternal Virtues*; there the Inſtruction and Direction, and Example and Authority of natural Superiours, is the proper means of laying before *ignorant* and *thoughtleſs* minds, and of inforcing upon them, thoſe original and antecedent Obligations. This latter, was the caſe of *Abraham* in the Text: He was to command *his children and his houſhold after him*, that they ſhould *keep the way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment*: that they ſhould *worſhip* the *True God* in oppoſition to *Idols*, and that they ſhould practiſe *Juſtice and Righteouſneſs* towards *Men*. The things were *in themſelves* neceſſarily, of *intrinſick eternal obligation*; and the Command of *Abraham*, was the ſetting That obligation before their eyes; teaching them to ſee it, and have a juſt ſenſe of it, reminding them to attend to it, and preſſing and inforcing it upon their Minds. In This caſe therefore, *Abraham* might well undertake, (and it is his great Commendation that he did ſo,) to command (as far as in him lay) *his children and his houſhold after him:* Becauſe the *things themſelves*, *together* with *His Command*, clearly carried along with them *their* own evidence and *conviction*. The *grounds and reaſons* of which conviction nevertheleſs, in the midſt of univerſally corrupt and idolatrous nations, might very poſſibly and probably, in *His* Family, as well as in all thoſe around him, not have been attended to; had they not been ſeconded by *His* Inſtruction, Example, and Command. *I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord.*

SERM. XXXVIII.

Another Inſtance, wherein there ſeems to be an Obligation laid upon Poſterity, by an *Act* of thoſe who went before them; is the caſe of *Circumciſion*. Gen. xvii. 9; *God ſaid to Abraham, thou ſhalt keep my Covenant, thou and thy ſeed after thee, in their generations:——Every man-child among you,——that is eight days old, ſhall be circumciſed,——for an everlaſting covenant: And the——man-child who——is not circumciſed, that ſoul ſhall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my Covenant.* Circumciſion, was a *Token of the Covenant* between God and That people; and an *Obligation* upon the circumciſed perſon, to keep the Law: Yet 'tis evident an infant at eight days old, could not give his *Conſent*, to take upon himſelf any ſuch Obligation. The *Reaſon* why the Obligation *was valid* upon him *notwithſtanding* was *This*. God was pleaſed to promiſe to *Abraham* and his Poſterity ſuch and ſuch particular Bleſſings, as were entirely a *free Gift*, and which he was not in juſtice under any obligation to have promiſed. Theſe Bleſſings, he limited to the Conditions of a particular Covenant; and the Seal or Token of That Covenant, was the ceremony of Circumciſion. Now if the perſon who, without his own *conſent*, was circumciſed the eighth day, would not afterwards perform the conditions of That Covenant; there was no wrong done him, if he received not thoſe Bleſſings, which by *Free Gift only* were annexed to the performance *of the conditions of* That particular Covenant. And he might *moreover* very juſtly be *puniſhed*, *for* rejecting That Covenant; becauſe *God* has, without controverſy, a Right to require from all his Creatures Obedience to ſuch Commands as he thinks fit to impoſe

SERM. XXXVIII.

poſe upon them, whether they themſelves give their *Aſſent* to his Commandments or no.

By *Analogy* drawn from this Rite of *Circumciſion*, it has for very many Ages been a general Practice in the Chriſtian Church, to receive Infants by *Baptiſm* into the Obligations of Faith and Obedience to the Goſpel; and to make Profeſſion for them, what they are to believe and obey. Whether this *Analogy* be *rightly* drawn, or no; and be a *ſufficient* and *adequate* Foundation, for what has been built upon it; is a controverſy which I ſhall not at preſent enter into: But from what has been already ſaid upon the *Unqueſtionable* caſe of *Circumciſion*, and upon *Abraham*'s *Command* in the Text to *his children and* to *his houſhold after him*, and upon the *Nature* of theſe ſorts of Obligations in *general*; the proper *application* I ſhall make, is, to conſider briefly *what Obligation* lies upon *Thoſe*, who, without their own Knowledge or Conſent have been *baptized* in their *Infancy*, and have had a *Baptiſmal Vow* made for them by *Others*; *What* Obligation *really* lies upon *Them* to *embrace* and *obey* the *Goſpel*, in the *whole* courſe of their *Lives*. Now it is very evident, *generally* ſpeaking, that no man has a Right to make any Promiſe for Another, without his own Conſent; and no man is obliged to *make good* any ſuch Promiſe, if there lies upon him no *other* obligation, but what ariſes merely from *ſuch* a Promiſe, made without his Knowledge or Conſent. Neither is it ſufficient, that the things promiſed to be done, are *really* for the perſon's own *Advantage* who is to perform them. For *every* perſon, when he arrives at years of underſtanding, has in all ſuch caſes, a Right to judge for Himſelf *what is* his own Advantage; and it is not what *Another* thinks, but what he himſelf is convinced to be for his own *Benefit*, that muſt finally determine him to chuſe and act. Wherefore, indeed, All Undertakings of this kind, ſuch as are *Baptiſmal Vows* made on the behalf *of Infants*, are not to be eſteemed as Promiſes what the perſon *ſhall* do, but what he ſhall be *taught*, what he ſhall be *inſtructed*, what he ſhall be *reminded* and *called upon* to do, and to take upon himſelf that he *will* do. For the true *Ground of obligation* in this caſe is, that the things themſelves to be performed are in their own nature ſuch, as every Perſon, when he arrives at the full Uſe of his Reaſon, would be indiſpenſibly obliged to perform, whether Others had beforehand undertaken for him any ſuch thing, or no. To *inquire carefully* into the Will of God, to *believe* what God declares, and to *do* what he commands, are obligations abſolutely incumbent upon every man, though they had never been bound upon him by any Vow or Promiſe: And therefore the Vow made at Baptiſm on the behalf of an Infant, is not ſo truly the Ground of his being obliged; as the *neceſſary obligation of* the *Things themſelves*, is that which makes the *Vow itſelf* to be valid upon him. Nor is any Promiſe made by *Others*, ſo properly with intention to lay any *obligation* upon the perſon, or tie him up to any thing which he would not otherwiſe have been bound to perform; But the true Deſign is only in way of kindneſs and aſſiſtance, to *remind* him of an obligation, *abſolute in itſelf*, that he carefully *inquire after*, and *believe* and *obey* the *Will of God*. And This may, very eaſily, be of Great *Benefit* and *Uſefulneſs*. For every man being obliged to *ſtudy* impartially the *Will of God*, and to improve himſelf in the *Knowledge of Truth* and in the *Practice of Virtue*, and to live up to the beſt *Light* he can obtain; it is plainly of very great Advantage to Men, to be from the Beginning inſtructed in the *way of Truth*, to have *Examples* ſet before them *of Virtue and Righteouſneſs*, and to be *reminded* and *called upon* to *conſider* and *attend to* thoſe Obligations, which are incumbent upon Men whether they attend to them or no. The Great and Righteous Judge of the Whole Earth, knows how to have compaſſion upon the *ignorant*, and upon them that are *out of the way*; and *will* reſerve *mercy* in ſtore, according to the exigency *of every* Man's caſe, for thoſe who, through ill inſtruction, wander in the ways of Error. But it is a mighty *Advantage*, and a particular *Bleſſing*, to be originally led into the way of *Righteouſneſs*. For ſo in the Text, it is not only recorded in commendation of *Abraham*, that he would *command his children and his houſhold after him*; but it is taken notice of alſo in way of conſequent Benefit to *Them*, that *They* would accordingly *keep the way of the Lord*, *to do Juſtice and Judgment*.

I ſhall

I ſhall conclude, with making this *One only* further Obſervation. Since *keeping the way of the Lord*, ſignifies clearly, in *Abraham*'s caſe, believing *the True God*, as well as doing *Righteouſneſs*; and ſince under the *Goſpel* ſtill more emphatically, ſincere *Faith* is always inſiſted upon, as well as *Virtuous Practice*: it may very naturally be inquired, if *Believing* does not, like our *Actions*, depend upon the *Will*; but if Men muſt *believe* what they have good Evidence for, and cannot *believe* what they ſee no reaſon to be convinced of; *how* then can Believing be a Duty, which a Man ſhould be bound to perform? The Anſwer plainly is: that *That Believing*, which is the Duty of a Chriſtian, is not, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, That bare Aſſent of the Underſtanding which is not in our Power to with-hold; but it ſignifies, in the *moral* ſenſe, that good Diſpoſition of the Mind and Will, by which a Man is diſpoſed to attend to, and examine impartially, to conſider and receive willingly, what upon due inquiry he ſhall find to be the Will of God; not careleſly and credulouſly, but upon ſober Reaſon, and proper Evidence. And ſo likewiſe on the contrary; *Unbelief*, in Scripture, does not ſignify disbelieving what wants juſt and ſufficient proof; but it always means, either careleſly and negligently rejecting without Inquiry and without Reaſon; or elſe rejecting wilfully and obſtinately, through the Love of Sin and Vice. And this is evidently the caſe of all profane, looſe, and debauched Infidels; who, merely, becauſe they hate to be reformed, pretend to disbelieve, what if they ſeriouſly examined as they ought to do, they would find all poſſible reaſon to embrace.

SERM. XXXVIII.

SERMON XXXIX.

The Nature of Human Actions.

LUKE xi. 35.

Take heed therefore, that the Light which is in Thee be not Darkneſs.

SERM. XXXIX.

UPON our Lord's having worked a remarkable Miracle, ver. 14; The *Phariſees*, who were reſolved not to be convinced by *Any* Evidence whatſoever, becauſe his Doctrine was a perpetual Reproof of their Hypocriſy and Other Vices; alledged, ſome of them, *ver.* 15; that *he caſt out Devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the Devils.* Others, *tempting him*; ver. 16; *ſought of him a ſign from Heaven:* That is, Pretending to diſtruſt the Miracles which he worked on *Earth*, as if *Theſe* might poſſibly be the Effect of ſome *Magical* Power or Artifice; they inſiſted that he ſhould call for ſome miraculous Sign directly from Heaven. Our Lord, knowing the Wickedneſs of their Hearts, *ver.* 17; and that they did not really deſire to be convinced, but only ſought

ſought for occaſions of cavilling; tells the people, *ver.* 29; *This is an evil generation; They ſeek a Sign, and there ſhall no Sign be given it.* And then he deſcribes the *Incurableneſs* of the Malice and Hypocriſy of theſe *Phariſees*; in that their Notions even of *Religion it ſelf*, the very Principle from which alone there is Hope of reformation of Manners; their Notions even about *This very thing*, were *themſelves* the Great *Spring* and *Fountain* of Corruption. Their *Religion itſelf* was *Pride* and *Party*, *Popularity* and *External Show*. And if the *Guide* of men's Actions be *itſelf* thus *vicious*, how vicious muſt their Actions be! Ver. 34. *The Light* (ſays he) *of the Body, is the Eye: Therefore when thine eye is ſingle, thy whole Body alſo is full of Light; But when thine Eye is Evil, thy Body alſo is full of Darkneſs.* His meaning is: What the *Eye* is to the *Body*; That very ſame thing in proportion, the *Moral Judgment* and *Underſtanding*, the Directing Principle, is to a man's *Mind*. If this *Moral Judgment* of the Underſtanding be unbiaſſed and uncorrupt, and hearkned to with Simplicity and Sincerity; it *will* either direct and preſerve men in the Paths of Truth and Right, or be perpetually calling upon them to return into them. But as, when a man's *Eyes* are blinded or put out, his whole Body muſt of neceſſity move in Darkneſs: So, if the *Moral Judgment* of the Mind, the Principle which ought to guide and direct men's Actions, be *itſelf* perverted by unreaſonable Prejudices, and corrupted by vicious Appetites and Paſſions; there is no hope, but ſuch perſons muſt continue in Error and Wickedneſs. *Take heed therefore*, adds our Lord in the words of the Text; *Take Heed, that the Light which is in thee, be not Darkneſs*: Let every man above all things conſider and take care, that this *Moral Judgment* of his Mind and underſtanding, be not corrupted with blind Unreaſonable Prejudices, and with vicious and wilfully indulged Affections. For in That caſe, his very *Guide* becomes his *Seducer*; and his *Light* itſelf, is *Darkneſs*.

In the following Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I ſhall 1*ſt* conſider briefly the *Nature* of *Human Actions*; and what *Dependence* they have upon the *directing Principle*, upon the *Light* or *Underſtanding* that is in the Mind of Man. 2*dly*, I ſhall ſhow *what Power* men have over their own Actions, with regard to the *Influence* of That Light or Underſtanding, by which they are to be directed. And 3*dly*, I ſhall conſider of what *Conſequence* it is in matters of Religion, that men fail not in this firſt and grand Foundation of all; in the *Root*, the *Spring*, the univerſal *Guide* and *Director* of their Actions. *Take heed, that the Light which is in thee, be not Darkneſs.*

I. I am to conſider the *Nature* of *Human Actions*; and what *Dependence* they have upon the *directing Principle*; upon the *Light* or *Underſtanding* that is in the Mind of Man. The *Motions of Matter* being All *neceſſary*, it is evident that *Matter* can in no ſenſe poſſibly be capable of *any Action at all*. It can neither begin to *move itſelf* when *at Reſt*, nor put any *Stop to itſelf* when *in Motion*, nor in any degree alter its own *determination*, or its preſent *State* or *manner of Exiſtence*. But whatever *impreſſions* it receives from the *Impulſes* of other *Matter*, or from the *Influences* of external *Agents*; by *Theſe*, and *Theſe only*, it is always neceſſarily and invariably determined. *Senſitive* and *Brute Animals* have in themſelves a *higher* Principle, a Principle of *Self-motion*; by which they act and determine themſelves, according to the Influence of certain *Appetites and Paſſions*. But it is always according to That Influence and Direction *merely*. For over the *Appetites and Paſſions themſelves*, they have *No Government*; no *moral Judgment or Diſcernment* of the Difference of *Good and Evil*; no *ſuperiour Light or Direction*, by which to *ſuppreſs* a hurtful *Appetite*, or *over-rule* the Inſtincts of *Paſſion*: And *therefore* they are not at all *accountable* for any thing they do. This is the proper and peculiar Nature of *Human* Actions; the diſtinguiſhing character by which *Man*, as a *rational* and *moral Agent*, is diſtinguiſhed from the inferiour Creation. He not only has in himſelf a *Power of Acting*, which is in common to him with the irrational creatures, but he has moreover a *ſtill higher* Principle or Power of *directing* his Actions, with ſome *determinate Views*, and to ſome certain and conſtant *End*. He has a Power of judging *beforehand*, concerning the *Conſequences* of his Actions, concerning the Reaſonableneſs or Unreaſonableneſs of the End he aims at; and he has a Power of recollecting, *after* the Action done,

SERM. XXXIX.

done, whether he acted with a good or an evil View. He can either *follow* the irregular Motions of All his *Appetites and Passions*, as do the Beasts that perish; or he can *restrain* and *over-rule* their Sollicitations, by attending to the Guidance of a *Superiour Light* of *Reason and Religion*. Nay, a man *cannot* indeed *but* have *some* View and Design in every thing he does. Even when he abandons himself *most implicitly* to the *Brutal* Guidance of *mere Appetite and Passion*, still he does it with some *View*; and with a *Consciousness*, which *Beasts* have not, that he knowingly and deliberately *chuses* to aim at some mean and unworthy End. Hence arises That *Judgment of Reflexion* which we call *Conscience*; by which a man either *approves* or *condemns* his own *past* Actions, and apprehends that he shall accordingly be *approved* or *condemned* by *Him* also to whom he must finally *give account* of himself. *If* a man, in the general course of his Life, accustoms himself to consider these things beforehand, that is, if he will behave himself as a rational Creature; *If* he accustoms himself in all his Actions to consider the Reason and Equity of Things, to consider what is reasonable for *Himself* to do, or for *Him* to expect should be done by *Another*; to consider what is agreeable to the Will of God, and likely to be approved at the Bar of an impartial and All-seeing Judge: *If* This (I say) be his main directing Principle, and the Point which he constantly keeps in View; his Actions, *generally* speaking, will not fail to be Virtuous and Good. For such as is the Root or Cause, such will be the Effect: Such as is the Fountain, such will be the Streams that issue from it. A Good tree, will not *usually* bring forth Bad fruit. A Good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, will naturally bring forth Good things. For out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth will speak, and the Hands will be accordingly directed to act.

On the contrary; *If* a man's Principles be loose and Atheistical; *If* he has no Sense of the Reason and Equity of things, nor Apprehension of the righteous Judgment of God; If his *Views* be no other than the satisfying of his Appetites, the gratification of his Passions, the pursuing his present Interests, and pleasing his own unreasonable Self-will; it cannot be, but his Actions will be *generally* immoral and vicious.

Further yet; *If* a man's Principles be *Superstitious*, that is, such as not only *set him at liberty* from the great Ties of Benevolence and Charity, but moreover lay upon him the strongest *direct and positive Obligation* to unrighteous Practices; in This case, his Conduct will necessarily be as much worse, than That of a person who has *no* Principles at all; as One who follows a *False Light* that leads directly to Destruction goes more certainly out of the right way, than he who at all adventures walks in *Darkness*. Such a one will act *wickedly*, not only when his *Pleasures*, his *Interest*, or his *Passions prompt* him; which is the farthest a Man of *no principles* will go; But *This Man*, in *opposition* to all his own natural Inclinations and Passions, as well as to the Reason and Truth of things, will, out of *Principle*, and in order to do *God* good Service, run zealously into the vilest barbarities of unrighteousness. This is a consideration very necessary to be distinctly attended to, concerning the *Nature* and *Spring* of *Human Actions*; and what *Dependence* they have upon the *directing Principle*, upon the *Light* or *Understanding* that is in the Mind of Man.

II. I Proposed to show *what Power* Men have over their own Actions, with regard to the *Influence* of That Light or Understanding, by which they are to be directed. Every Action a Man does, Every Action of any considerable importance in life, Every Action that is of a Moral or Immoral nature; must of necessity be done with *some View* or other, either upon a *Good Principle* or a *Bad* one. For when we speak of man's having *No Principles* at all, the Meaning is only that they have No *Good Principles*; and that they act entirely upon this One *ill* Principle, of thinking themselves at Liberty from all Obligation to regard the Essential Differences of Good and Evil. Every Action (I say) of a rational Creature, every such action as has any thing of Morality or Immorality in it, must of necessity be done with *Some View* or other, either upon a *Good Principle* or a *Bad* one. Now if Men's *Principles* were *necessarily* implanted in their

their *Nature*, and their *Actions* by a like *natural Neceſſity* followed from their *Principles*; the Conſequence then indeed would be, that Men had *no Power* at all over their Own Actions, and conſequently could be no way *accountable* for what they do. But the Truth, plainly is This. As the *Eye*, or the *Faculty of Seeing*, is not at all formed by the Power of *Man*; and the *Light*, which is the *Object* of Sight, is likewiſe what *God* has made it, and has no dependence on *Man*'s Will or Pleaſure; and therefore Men are not anſwerable for having *better* or *worſe* Organs of Senſe, or for having *more* or *leſs* Light, but only for the *Uſe of Thoſe Eyes* and of *That Light* which they have: So, with regard to the *Mind* likewiſe, both the *internal Capacity of Underſtanding*, and the *external Means of Information*, are what *God* pleaſes to beſtow on every Man, and have no dependence on the perſon's *own Will*; And therefore no Man is anſwerable for having a *larger* or *ſmaller Capacity*, or for having *more* or *fewer Means* of *Information*: But he is accountable for the *Uſe* of *That* degree of Underſtanding, and for the *Uſe* or *Abuſe* of *Thoſe* Means of Knowledge, *whatſoever* they be, which God has thought fit to afford him. A Man may *ſhut* his Eyes, and may *chuſe* Darkneſs rather than Light: Or he may, through *Wilfulneſs* or *Paſſion*, chuſe to follow a *Falſe Light* inſtead of a *True one*, an *imaginary Spectre* inſtead of a *Reality*: Or he may *put out* his Eyes, and bring himſelf under a ſort of neceſſity of blindly following Some *Guide*, who (as it happens) may equally lead him in the *Right* Way or in a *Wrong* one. A Man may by *Negligence*, or by *Wilfulneſs*, or by *Love of Vice*, or by *Any cuſtomary* and *habitual ill Practice*, pervert or blind his own *Underſtanding*. He may, by *rejecting* the *Means* of diſcovering the Truth, through his own *Fault*, and not through Want of Capacity, form to himſelf *ill Principles* inſtead of *Good* ones. Or, if he has never ſo *good Principles*, yet, as *ſeeing the Way* is not neceſſarily *walking in it*, he may ſuffer himſelf to be *Tempted* to act *againſt* his Principles, to act *againſt* the Reaſon of his *own Mind*, as well as againſt the Reaſon and Truth of *Things*. Men therefore *have a Power* over their own Actions, notwithſtanding *all the Influence* of That Light or Underſtanding, *by which they are to be directed*. Nevertheleſs; ſince, *generally* ſpeaking, ſuch as Men's *Principles* are, ſuch will be Their *Actions*; and He whoſe Conduct is directed by ſettled *ill Principles*, will much more *conſtantly*, and in much *greater Inſtances*, and with Effects of much *higher Malignity*, do what is Wrong; than He who, having *virtuous and good Principles*, yet in particular Caſes fails of keeping up to them in Practice; it is hence obvious,

SERM. XXXIX.

III. In the *Third* place, to obſerve, of what *Conſequence* it is in matters of Religion, that Men fail not in this firſt and grand Foundation; in the *Root*, the *Spring*, the univerſal *Guide* and *Director* of their Actions: *Take heed, that the Light which is in thee, be not Darkneſs*. If a Man has the *Beſt* Principles that can be: If he be firmly perſwaded in his own Mind, of the eſſential Difference of Good and Evil, of God's Government of the World, and of a Judgment to come: If he has right Notions of the true Nature of Religion, that it conſiſts in living *ſoberly*, *righteouſly and godly*, under the Inſpection of a righteous and all-ſeeing Judge: Still, ſuch is the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, ſo many are the Temptations and Allurements of the World; ſo blind are the Appetites, ſo ſtrong the Paſſions of Men; that nothing is more common, than to ſee even theſe *beſt of Principles* over-ruled, and the Force of them defeated, by the Strength and Prevalency of different Temptations. How much *more*, when Men's *Principles themſelves* are *conſiſtent* with Wickedneſs, muſt it be expected that *Degeneracy of Manners* will prevail! and ſtill *more*, if their Principles be not only *conſiſtent* with Vice, but ſuch as moreover *directly lead* them, and even *lay the Obligations of Conſcience* upon them, to *unrighteous Practices! If the Salt* itſelf *has loſt its Savour wherewith ſhall* things *be ſeaſoned?* And *if the Light* itſelf *which is in thee, be Darkneſs, how great is That Darkneſs?* To inſtance in Particulars. If a Man's Religion conſiſts chiefly, in a confident Preſumption of his own unconditionate *Predeſtination*; will not This naturally lead him to be *ſtiff* and *cenſorious*, and

SERM. XXXIX.

to have too little Care of his *Moral and Equitable* Behaviour towards all Men? If a man can perſwade himſelf that a ſtrong *Credulity*, or an imaginary *Belief* of *unintelligible Notions*, can be truly acceptable in the Sight of God; has not This an obvious and evident Tendency, to make him pride himſelf in the pretended *Righteouſneſs* of his *Faith*; and deſpiſe the real Virtues, of *Impartiality*, *Equity*, and *Love of Truth*? If Another can prevail with himſelf to believe, that after a *vicious and immoral Life*, he may at laſt upon a Bed of Sickneſs, by the *Abſolution of the Prieſt*, or by the *Sacraments of the Church*, or by a *confident Reliance upon the Merits of Chriſt*, elude the Threatnings of the Almighty, and artfully eſcape the Wrath of the Juſt and Righteous Judge of the whole Earth; does not this plainly give him encouragement to defer his Repentance, to think Virtue and Goodneſs really needleſs, and to *continue in Sin, that Grace may abound*? Again, If a Man can fancy that the moſt important and fundamental point of Religion, is the adhering fiercely to ſome one particular *Sect*, *Party*, or *Denomination* of Men; and the contending violently *for* or *againſt* certain peculiar *Forms* or *Ceremonies* of Worſhip; has not This an evident Tendency to make him believe, that, by a great *Zeal* for theſe external Forms, he may commute or compenſate for the Want of thoſe Moral Virtues, which Alone are of *Real and Eſſential Goodneſs*? But if, beyond All This, a Man's very *Mind and Conſcience* be ſo far defiled, as that he can imagine Religion to lay a direct *Obligation* upon him to commit ſome of the greateſt of Wickedneſſes, to make uſe of the *vileſt Frauds* and the moſt *open Violences*, to *break Faith* againſt the moſt *Solemn Engagements*, and even *with the greateſt Cruelty* to *deſtroy Men's Lives* in order *to do God good Service*; as Thoſe of the Church of *Rome* have frequently done: Whenever This (I ſay) is the Caſe, ſo that Men can ſatisfy their very *worſt Paſſions*, of *Ambition*, *Pride*, *Cruelty*, and *Tyranny*, not only *without the Reproach*, but even *with the higheſt Applauſe*, of their own Conſciences; What Hope, what Poſſibility is there, for *Virtue and Goodneſs* here to take Any place? *Take heed, that the* Light *which is in thee, be not Darkneſs.*

The *Light*, which God *originally* implanted in Men, is *Reaſon*, or their *Natural* Senſe and Diſcernment of the Difference of Good and Evil. The Light of *Revelation*, is a Confirmation and Improvement of the *Natural Light* of Reaſon. And they are *Both of them* extinguiſhed, by the *Darkneſs* of *Irreligion*, and (which is ſtill of *worſe* conſequence) by the *Falſe Lights of Superſtition.*

The *Inferences* from what has been ſaid, are briefly as follows.

1*ſt*, From this exhortation of our Saviour given to all Chriſtians, *Take heed, that the Light which is in thee, be not darkneſs*; it is evident that perſons even of the *meaneſt* capacities, *may* and *muſt* have a *clear Underſtanding* of their Chriſtian *Duty*, ſo far as it is at any time to *Them* a *Duty*. To live *ſoberly*, *righteouſly*, and *godly*, with a conſtant Senſe of God upon their Minds, and under a perpetual Expectation of the future Judgment; is what the *Loweſt* Capacities may *ſee clearly* and *diſtinctly* to be their Duty. This is *Fundamental* in Religion. Things of *greater Difficulty*, they cannot be obliged to underſtand or regard, any further than they meet with *particular Light* to direct them. If at any time they run on *implicitly*, and ſtop not at the things they *certainly know*, they run an *apparent hazard* either of walking in *Darkneſs*, or (which is ſtill *more* dangerous) of following a *Falſe and Deceitful Light.*

2. Whoever at any time ſpeaks againſt *Reaſon*, in matters of Religion; *knows not*, or conſiders not, *whereof he affirms.* All *Reaſon* and *Truth* is from *God*; And God does as truly *reveal* himſelf by the *Nature and Reaſon of Things*, as by *Inſpiration of Words. Reaſon*, is the *Light* of God's *Creation:* And though Men, if they be not very careful and very ſincere, *may* miſtake their own *Fancies and Imaginations* for *Reaſon*; yet the *Nature and Truth of Things*, is ſtill really what it is; and *Light* is always *diſcernible*, if Men would honeſtly attend to it. The Experience of all Ages and of all Nations hath ſhown, that no Errors have been of ſuch wide Extent, and of ſuch laſting Continuance, and ſo deſtructive of all Moral Virtue and Goodneſs; as thoſe which Men have been led into, by departing from the moſt *evident and rational Fundamentals* of Religion, to follow the *blind and falſe Lights* of *Superſtition.*

3. From

3. From what has been ſaid, it is evident it never was our Lord's intention, that there ſhould be among Men (what the Church of *Rome* pretends to be) an *Infallible Guide.* Had any ſuch thing been appointed of God, our Saviour's Caution in the Text, and in numberleſs other places of his Goſpel, had been needleſs and abſurd. Teachers of Religion, are, in the nature of the thing, neceſſary; and, in fact, expreſly appointed of Chriſt. But all *Teaching*, ſuppoſes that perſons are *capable of being taught*; and that *when* they *Are* taught, they *can Then ſee* and *know* the thing to be *right*. In the way to eternal life, a man may very well be ſuppoſed to *want* the direction of a *Guide*: Yet in the whole Courſe of That Way, he may by Many *very certain Marks and Tokens*, laid down *beforehand* in *Reaſon and Scripture*, diſtinguiſh clearly whether his *Guide* directs him *right* or no: And if his Guide leads him to a *Precipice*, he may eaſily enough diſcern it. *Take heed, that the Light which is in thee, be not Darkneſs.* SERM. XXXIX.

SERMON

SERMON XL.

How to judge of Moral Actions.

LUK. VI. 44.

For every Tree is known by his own Fruit: For of Thorns men do not gather Figs, nor of a Bramble-buſh gather they Grapes.

SERM. XL.

THERE are *ſome Figures of Speech* founded upon Similitudes ſo obvious, ſo natural, ſo expreſſive, that whilſt they convey into the minds even of Thoſe who have the meaneſt capacities, a Notion or Doctrine altogether as *diſtinct* and as *eaſy* to be underſtood, as any *Literal* expreſſion whatſoever; they at the ſame time *illuſtrate* it *moreover* with the *cleareſt Light*, and *confirm* the *Truth* of it with the *ſtrongeſt Reaſon* or *Argument*. Of This kind, there is great Variety of Inſtances of Scripture.

Thus when St. *Paul* exhorts Chriſtians to preſent their Bodies a *Living Sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God; and elſewhere tells them, that they themſelves are the *Temple* of God; and threatens, that if any man defile the *Temple* of God, Him ſhall God deſtroy: Under the *ſtrong image* of the Unfitneſs and Abominableneſs

bleneſs, the Deteſtableneſs and Profaneneſs of any Uncleanneſs or Impurity appearing in the *Temple of God*; the odiouſneſs of all *moral* impurity, of all *debauched* Practices whatſoever in Any perſon who profeſſes himſelf a Worſhipper of God, is ſet forth after a *more lively and affecting manner*, than it could be by any *literal* deſcription whatſoever: And, under the *obvious* and *ſenſible idea*, that a *Sacrifice* offered to *God*, even of a *Beaſt ſlain*, could not, with *any* juſt ſenſe of the Greatneſs of the Divine Majeſty, but be *without Blemiſh*; is repreſented the Acceptableneſs of a *Living Rational Perſon*, dedicating himſelf to the Service of God by a *ſober and virtuous courſe of life*, in oppoſition to every kind of Debauchery, *more ſtrongly and pathetically*, than it could any way have been done in *plain and direct Terms*, *without* ſuch a *figurative* expreſſion. SERM. XL.

In like manner in the words of the *Text*, the neceſſary Connexion between the nature of men's *Actions*, and the *Principles* from which they flow; and the Abſurdity of ſuppoſing, that *good Actions* can ever flow from *ill Principles*, or *ill Actions* from *good Principles*; is expreſſed with greater Clearneſs and Strength, under the *ſimilitude* of the regular Productions of nature, than it could have been by the moſt *literal and direct* Aſſertion. *Every Tree is known by its own Fruit: For of Thorns men do not gather Figs, nor of a Bramble-buſh gather they Grapes.*

Our Saviour, in his Parable of the *Sower*, St. *Matt.* xiii, under the ſimilitude of *different ſorts of ground*, wherein good Seed being ſown, brought forth *fruit* according to the nature of the Soil, in ſome places plentifully, in others thinly, in others none at all; gives a very *emphatical* and *accurate* deſcription of the different Effects, which the Doctrines of True Religion, or the Teaching and Exhortations of Virtue, have upon the Lives and Actions of different Sorts of men. As the *ſame Seed*, ſown in a *good Soil* or a *bad*, brings forth *much Fruit* or *little*, or *periſhes entirely* and never grows at all; ſo the Knowledge of Truth, and the Inſtructions of Righteouſneſs, *according to* the *different diſpoſitions of the minds* of Thoſe, to whom the Arguments of Reaſon and the Motives of Religion are propoſed; are either entirely ſuppreſſed by them, and extinguiſhed, or elſe, ſometimes in a greater, ſometimes in a leſs degree, they produce the Fruit of *Virtuous Acts and Habits*, in the courſe of a righteous and religious Life. And from hence, throughout the whole Scripture, by a figure of Speech grounded upon *the analogy of This Parable*, the Acts and Habits of every Moral Virtue, founded upon the Motives of the Goſpel, and ſpringing from the Principles of True Religion, from the Belief of God and of a Judgment to come; are very expreſſively termed, *the* Fruits *of the Spirit*; the natural *Produce* of a Mind rightly inſtructed in the Doctrines of *Truth*, and directed and influenced in all its Actings, by a juſt Senſe of what is *Right in itſelf* and *Acceptable to God*; Gal. v. 22; *The* Fruit *of the Spirit, is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance.* And They who by a virtuous courſe of Life in their whole converſation, and in every part of their Behaviour in the World, ſhow that their Religion is not an *empty Notion* or external *Form of Godlineſs*, a mere *Denomination* of a Sect or Party; but a real *Principle* and Ground of Action, a real *Rule and Guide* of life and manners; are by the Apoſtle deſcribed under *This* character, that they *bring forth* Fruit *unto God*; having *their* Fruit *unto Holineſs, and the End everlaſting Life*; Rom. vi. 22; vii. 4. The *Figure*, is the *very ſame* with *That* made uſe of in *the Text*: *Every Tree is known by his own* Fruit; *for of Thorns men do not gather Figs, nor of a Bramble-buſh gather they Grapes.* And the *literal* ſenſe of it is explained by our Saviour himſelf in the very next words following; ver. 45: *A good man, out of the good Treaſure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treaſure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: For of the abundance of the Heart, his Mouth ſpeaketh.* Now according to *This* explication, it is evident that, whether by this figurative phraſe, *every Tree*, we underſtand the *Perſon himſelf* who acts, or the *Principles* from which his Actions flow; the *Senſe* is, either way, *one and the ſame.* By the *Actions* of a man's Life, by the whole *Courſe and Tenour* of his Behaviour in the World, and by *no other diſtinction* whatſoever, can be aſcertained the *True Character* of any *Perſon*, and the *Real Goodneſs* or *Badneſs* of his *Principles.* External *Names* and *Denominations*, either of *Things* or *Perſons*, are all *deceitful.* Pretences to *Opinions* and *Doctrines*, may be all *fallacious.* *Forms* and *Obſervances* of all kinds may be *hypocritical.* Any thing

SERM. XL.

may be called by *Any Name*, and Any thing may appear under *Any Shape*. But never can it happen in Any caſe, that of *Thorns* men ſhould *gather Figs*, or that of a *Bramble-buſh* they ſhould *gather Grapes*. Never can it happen in Any caſe, that men of *corrupt Principles* and *vitious Lives*, can really have any *True Religion*; or that Any *True Religion*, any *Doctrine* that is from God, ſhould be the Parent of any *Vice* or of any *Folly*, of any *Abſurdity*, of any *Cruelty*, of any *Pride*, *Tyranny*, or *Contentiouſneſs*, or of any thing *miſchievous* among men. The *Acknowledgment* and the rational *Worſhip* of *God* who ruleth over All; The *Univerſal Love* and *Goodwill* of *All men* towards *All*, in which our Lord declares *all the Law and the Prophets*, and all the *Goſpel* too, to be ſummarily contained; The *Sobriety*, *Holineſs*, and *Virtuous Living*, which the Religion of Chriſt requires in Thoſe, who expect a Judgment to come, and who (*according to his Promiſe*) *look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs*: Theſe things can *no more poſſibly* be the real productive *Cauſe* of any thing *hurtful* to Mankind, than a *Vine* can bring forth any *other Fruit* than *Grapes*, or a *Fig-tree* than *Figs*; or than *Sheep* (according to *another* of our Lord's ſimilitudes) can juſtly be charged with the Rapine committed by *Wolves in Sheeps-clothing*. There is *no Principle in Nature* of more *certain and neceſſary Truth*, of more *evident Clearneſs*, of more *univerſal Extent* and *Uſefulneſs* than This. And for *This reaſon* our Saviour, upon ſo *many* occaſions, and in *numerous Places* of the Goſpel, repeats this Maxim, and makes perpetual Alluſions to it. Thus *Matt.* vii. 15; *Beware of falſe Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps-clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves: Ye ſhall know them by their* Fruits: *Do men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thiſtles? A good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit, neither can a corrupt Tree bring forth good Fruit: Every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down and caſt into the Fire*: Or, as he elſewhere expreſſes himſelf concerning the hypocritical Phariſees; *Matt.* xv. 13; *Every Plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, ſhall be rooted up.* Again, *Matt.* xii. 33, 34; Concerning the ſame hypocrites, when, under a pretence of Zeal for Religion, they *blaſphemed* both the *Doctrine* and the *Works* of the Holy Ghoſt; *O Generation of Vipers*, ſays he, *how can ye, being Evil, ſpeak Good things? Either make the* Tree *good, and his* Fruit *good*; *or elſe make the* Tree *corrupt, and his* Fruit *corrupt*; *For the* Tree *is known by his* Fruit: That is; Either forbear theſe wicked and unrighteous Practices, or pretend not to make Profeſſion of Religion at all. To mention but One place more: *Joh.* xv. 1; *I am the true Vine*, ſaith our Lord, *and my Father is the Husbandman. Every Branch in me that beareth not Fruit, he taketh away; and every Branch that beareth Fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more Fruit.* The Meaning is: The Belief of the Doctrine of Chriſt, and of a Judgment to come, is the Foundation, the Root or Principle of all Chriſtian Virtues: Every man therefore who calls himſelf a Chriſtian, and yet lives not in the Practice of Chriſtian Virtue, is rejected of God, as a Dead Branch; as having no participation in That Vital Principle which alone unites him to Chriſt here, and entitles him to a Share in his Kingdom hereafter.

The Meaning of the figurative Expreſſions in the Text, being thus explained from the *Nature and Reaſon of the Thing*, and from the *Uſe of the like manner of Speaking* in *other places of Scripture*; the *Doctrine* contained in the words, appears plainly to be This: That by the *Actions* of a man's Life, by his *virtuous* or *vitious Practice*, by the whole *Courſe and Tenour* of his Behaviour in the World, and by *no other Mark or Diſtinction* whatſoever, can with any certainty be determined the *True Character* of *Any Perſon*, and the *Real Goodneſs* or *Badneſs* of the *Principles* by which he is governed. *Every Tree is known by his Own Fruit*: *For of Thorns men do not gather Figs, nor of a Bramble-buſh gather they Grapes.*

And the *Uſe* of this Doctrine is of the *greateſt Importance* and *Extent*: For, from hence may be eſtimated the *Excellency* and *Weightineſs* of Any particular *Truth*, and the Meaſure or Degree of *Malignity* of every Sort of *Error*, in matters of Religion. From hence may be judged the *Nature* and *Quality* of every kind of *Materials*, *built* (according to the Apoſtle St. *Paul*'s ſimilitude, 1 *Cor.* iii. 12.) *upon the Foundation* of *Chriſt*; whether it be *Gold*, *Silver*, *Precious-ſtones*, *Wood*, *Hay*, or *Stubble*. Whether it be *Work* of ſuch a ſort, as, when it comes to be *tried by* the *Fire* of the Divine Judgment, it will *abide*, and the Builder ſhall *receive a Reward* for it. Or whether

whether it *ſhall be burnt*, and *He accordingly ſhall ſuffer loſs*; and yet *he himſelf ſi-nally be ſaved*, but *ſo as by Fire*. Or whether, laſtly, it be ſuch as is *deſtructive* of the very *Foundation itſelf*, on which it is built; and Then That ſevere Threatning in the following words be applicable to him; ver. 17; *If any man deſtroy the Temple of God, Him ſhall God deſtroy.*

The *End* and *Deſign* of all *Religion*; the Proper *Effect* and *Produce* of *Good Principles*; the Good *Fruit* of a Good *Tree*; the *ultimate View* and *Fundamental Intention* of *all religious Truths*, implanted in men either by Nature or Teaching; is the Practice of *Virtue*. For the word *Religion*, in its very *Notion* and *original Meaning*, ſignifies an *Obligation*; an *Obligation* upon men, ariſing from the *Reaſon of Things* and from the *Government of God*, to *do* what is *juſt* and *virtuous* and *good*; to live, in a conſtant habitual Senſe and Acknowledgment of *God*, in the practice of univerſal Juſtice and Charity towards *Men*, and in a regular and ſober Government of *their Own* Paſſions; under a firm perſwaſion and continual expectation of the righteous diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments at their proper Seaſon, in the eternal Judgment of God. *This*, is the *Foundation* of Religion; the *Fundamental* Doctrine; in all *Places*, and at all *Times*, invariable and eternal. *This*, being corrupted by numerous *Superſtitions* among the *Jews*, and by the abſurdeſt *Idolatries* and moſt enormous *Immoralities* among the *Heathen*, *Chriſt* came into the World to *reſtore*; and, by the preaching of *Forgiveneſs* upon *True Repentance* and *effectual Amendment of Life and Manners*, to bring back Sinners to the Kingdom of God, through the Obedience of the Goſpel. *In proportion* therefore as *any Doctrine of Truth* has a greater or more proper and more immediate Tendency to *promote* This Great *End*, to *produce* This *Fruit* of *the Spirit*; exactly *the very ſame proportion* has it of *Weight* and *Excellency*, in the religious eſtimation of things: 'Tis *Gold*, or *Silver*, or *Precious Stones*, (in the Apoſtle's Language,) *built upon the Foundation of Chriſt*. And, on the *other* ſide, any *Erroneous Opinion*; in *proportion* as it has *Any*, or *No Moral* Influence; in the *very ſame proportion*, it is either *Faulty* or *Innocent*. 'Tis (in St. *Paul*'s ſimilitude) either *Wood*, *Hay*, *Stubble*; ſomething that is merely *loſt labour*, *uſeleſs* only, and *inſignificant*, and of *no Strength* in the Building: Or elſe it is *oppoſite to*, and *deſtructive of*, the very *Foundation* of the *Temple of God*. 'Tis (in the analogy of our *Saviour*'s Parable,) That which denominates a Man either to be a *Vine*, in which are many *Fruitleſs* Branches; or that he is (according to the Compariſon in the *Text*) a *Thorn* or a *Bramble-buſh*, from which it is impoſſible to expect there ſhould ever at all *be gathered Figs* or *Grapes*.

By *This Rule* therefore (I ſay) may certainly be diſtinguiſhed the *Meaſure* or *Degree* of *Malignity* of *every Sort* of *Error*, in matters of *Religion*.

By *This*, (to inſtance in *Particulars*,) it appears *Wherein* conſiſted the *malignity* of the Heathen-*Idolatry*, and *how Great* the *Evil* of it was. For whereas the rational *Worſhip* of *the One True God* of *Nature*, and *Governour* of the *Univerſe*, and the *Acknowledgment* of his *True Perfections* and *Attributes*, taught by the original uncorrupted Light of Nature and Reaſon, leads Men by a *direct* and *proper*, by an *immediate*, *natural*, and *perpetual Influence*, to the Imitation and *Practice* of thoſe moral and eternal *Virtues*, which, in their higheſt and complete Perfection, are the Excellencies of the Divine Nature itſelf; the *Worſhip* of *Wood and Stone*, on the contrary, by a no leſs natural and immediate Tendency, leads Men to place *empty ſuperſtitious* and *ſenſeleſs Obſervances* in the Room of all real Virtue and Goodneſs. And the *Worſhip* of *Fictitious Deities*, formed by the Imaginations of *Corrupt Men*, like to *Themſelves* in the Practice of all *Unrighteouſneſs and Debauchery*; This, ſtill *much more*, leads Men into the moſt *abominable Corruption* of Manners. According to the deſcription St. *Paul* gives of the Heathen-World; *Rom.* i. 21; *Becauſe that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, —— and did not like to retain God in their Knowledge*; therefore *God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient.*

Again: By the *ſame* meaſure of judging, may eaſily be underſtood the *Nature* of *That Error*, and the *Degree* of its *ill Effect*, which the Nation of the *Jews* had very generally fallen into, in and before our Saviour's time; *viz.* their laying the great *Streſs* of *Religion*, more upon the exact Obſervance of certain Outward *Ceremonies*, than upon the habitual Practice of *Moral Virtue*. The *Ceremonies* of the

Jewiſh

SERM. XL.

Jewiſh Law, *beſides* their perpetual *typifying* of the *Meſſiah* to come, and their *diſtinguiſhing* in a moſt remarkable manner the *National Worſhippers of the God of Heaven* from all the *idolatrous Nations* of the Earth; were moreover appointed of God to be continual *Emblems*, and as it were *Memorials* of their Obligation to *Moral Holineſs*. *Sanctify yourſelves*, ſaith the Lord; *Levit.* xi. 44; *and ye ſhall be Holy, for I am Holy:* And *if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant,* —— *ye*
Ex. xix. 5. *ſhall be unto me a Kingdom of Prieſts, and a Holy Nation.* *So far* therefore as their Obſervance of the *Ceremonies* of the Law, promoted the *End* for which thoſe Ordinances were appointed; *So far as* they kept that people *ſteddy* in their *Adherence* to the *Worſhip* of the *True God*, and, by the Care required in avoiding every *natural* Impurity, continually reminded them to be much more fearful of whatever was *morally* ſuch: *So far* thoſe Ceremonies were of *real Eſteem* in the Sight of *God*, and of *real* religious *Advantage* to *Men*. Whenſoever the Obſervance of the ſame *outward Ceremonies*, was ſeparate from the *internal Moral* Benefit; the *Ceremony* then became *uſeleſs*, and the *Obſervation* of it *vain*. But when at any time the *Ceremony* came *in competition* with the *Moral Duty*, or was *preferred* before it, or was preſumed to be *acceptable* in the *Stead* of it; in the *Stead* of the *weightier matters of the Law, Juſtice, Mercy, and Faithfulneſs*; Then the *Ceremony*, though of God's *own* appointment, became (as the *Prophets* in the *Old Teſtament*, and *our Saviour* in the *Goſpel*, perpetually declare; it became) *odious* to *God*, and *abominable* in his Sight.

Laſtly: By the *ſame* Rule may be judged the *degree* of *Malignity* of any *erroneous Notions* or *Opinions* among Chriſtians. The *End* and *Deſign* of the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, is to *reſtore Sinners* to the *Favour of God*, by bringing them back to the Practice of *Righteouſneſs* and *True Holineſs*. So far as *Any Error whatſoever*, hurts not and prevents not *This Deſign*; ſo far as it is merely *ſpeculative*, and produces no Fruit of evil Conſequences in *Practice*; ſo far it is *innocent*, and may be aſcribed to *Weakneſs*. But in what *degree* ſoever its Influence is hurtful to *Virtue*, in the very *ſame* proportion it is always *Faulty* in *Men*, and *blame-worthy* before *God*.

For inſtance: With regard to erroneous Notions concerning *God*: Every Opinion concerning the Divine Nature or Perfections, which is in itſelf *abſurd* and *unintelligible*, is juſt *ſo far* hurtful to Religion, as it *diverts* Men from the *Practice* of the *Law of Righteouſneſs*, by filling them with a *childiſh* and *ſuperſtitious* imagination, that *God* is *pleaſed* with their *pretending* or *fanſying* that they *believe* they *know not what*. Notions concerning *abſolute* and *unconditionate Predeſtination*, are juſt ſo far faulty and blame-worthy in Religion, as they *cut* the *Sinews* and *demoliſh* all the *Motives* of *Virtue*, by aſcribing to God *ſuch* a *Sovereignty*, as *deſtroys* all the *Other Perfections* of his Nature; a *Sovereignty*, denoting a *Power* of acting, in *Moral* Matters, without regard to *Moral* Reaſon; Which, in Truth and Reality, is no more an *Attribute of God*, than the *Power* of acting in *natural* things, contrary to *Natural* Poſſibility. Erroneous Notions concerning *Faith*, (taking it to ſignify a mere *credulity*; whereas in truth, when ſpoken of as a Chriſtian virtue, it always means *Fidelity*, or *Acting Faithfully* and ſteddily *upon* Chriſtian *Principles*:) Errors concerning *Grace*, (taking it to ſignify an *Operation* of *God* upon *Men*, when indeed it denotes his *gracious Acceptance* of their *Repentance* and *Amendment*, brought about by the *Motives* and *Aſſiſtances* of the *Goſpel*:) Errors concerning the *Merits of Chriſt*, (when *vicious* and *debauched* perſons hope to be ſaved by *His Merits*, inſtead of *reforming and amending their Manners* in order to obtain Forgiveneſs through His Interceſſion:) And, ſtill more than all theſe, Applications made to *Angels*, and to *Saints departed*, and to *Images* of Wood and Stone, and *Other* the like *Inventions*; All Theſe things, are, upon One and the ſame Account, *deſtructive* of *true Religion*; in that they ſuppoſe Obedience to the eternal and unchangeable Law of God, which is the Practice of *Moral Virtue*, may be commuted for by any other Performances whatſoever: Which is indeed the *Eſſence* of all *Superſtition*: 'Tis, in the Alluſion made by our Saviour in the Text, the Fruit of the *Thorn* or *Bramble-buſh*, inſtead of *Grapes*.

Again; With regard likewiſe to erroneous Notions concerning our Duty towards *Men*: Every Opinion that leads in Practice to *Contentiouſneſs*, *Pride*, *Cruelty*, and the like; is evidently ſo far *not innocent*, but *deſtructive* of Religion, as it is *inconſiſtent*

SERM. XL.

conſiſtent with the Great and Eternal Law of *Charity* and *Good-will* towards *Mankind*. From whence may eaſily be perceived the extreme *Malignity* of the *Romiſh Doctrine* of *Perſecution*; by which all the *Authority*, wherewith God has inveſted men for the *Incouragement of Virtue* and *Puniſhment of Vice*, has been wickedly and perverſely imployed in *forcing* a *violent and hypocritical Pretence* of *Unity of Opinion*, in matters generally of *doubtful Speculation*, and oft-times of *Ungodly Practice* too; to the entire *Subverſion* both of *Truth and Charity*.

Laſtly; With regard to erroneous Notions concerning every man's own private Duty in the Government of *Himſelf*: Every Opinion that gives Licence to Any Sort of *Debauchery*; that gives men Incouragement to *ſin*, in hopes *that Grace may abound*; *turning the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, and *making Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin*; Every ſuch opinion, I ſay, is a *Root of Bitterneſs*, and brings forth *Fruit unto Death*. Of This Sort is That deſperate Notion which has prevailed ſo much in the Church of *Rome*; a relying upon repeated *Confeſſions* and *Abſolutions* for the *Pardon of Sins*, in the *Practice* of which they ſtill however *continue*. And of the ſame Kind is That dangerous expectation even among *Proteſtants* too; when Men of *looſe and debauched Lives* flatter themſelves, that, without Any real Virtue or Holineſs, they ſhall be accepted of God, upon their performing, on a Bed of Sickneſs and at the Approach of *Death*, ſome of thoſe external Duties, which were inſtituted on purpoſe to be *Obligations* and Aſſiſtances to *Holineſs* of *Life*. But our Rule is One, and Plain: *He that doth Righteouſneſs, is Righteous*. Which is the *literal* Meaning of the *Figure* in the Text: *Every Tree is known by his own Fruit: For of Thorns men do not gather Figs, nor of a Bramble-buſh gather they Grapes.*

SERMON XLI.

The Nature of Religious Truths.

2 TIM. ii. 25.

In Meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.

SERM. XLI.

AS *Light* is neceſſarily and eſſentially different from *Darkneſs*, notwithſtanding thoſe who are blind cannot diſtinguiſh That difference; ſo, notwithſtanding the Weakneſs and Blindneſs of mens Underſtandings, and the much worſe Confuſion ariſing from the Corruption and Perverſeneſs of their Wills; yet *Truth* is ſtill, in the Nature of Things, always real and invariable, and, for the moſt part, *diſtinguiſhable* alſo from *Error*. In *ſome kinds of* things, 'tis indeed very *difficult* for *Us* to diſcover where the Truth lies; the *Cauſes of* things, being abſtruſe; the *Ends and Deſigns of* them, remote; the *things themſelves*, often intricate; the *Manner* how they may poſſibly be, diverſe and various; and *our Underſtanding*, in itſelf finite and fallible. But This difficulty of finding out the Truth, is generally in things of That nature only; which are of no great importance for us to know. As the *Eyes* of our *Body*, are fitted only to diſcern

discern things within the reach of such a distance, as 'tis of Use to us in Life to comprehend within our View; so our *Understanding*, which is the *Eye of* the *Mind*, can very difficultly search into the Truth of numberless things, which it does not concern us distinctly to know. But in All things *of importance*, in all things *of great and real Use* to us, such as are the eternal Differences of Good and Evil, and all Matters fundamental in *Religion*; in *These* things, Truth is always as distinguishable to the unprejudiced Understanding of a Person even of a *mean* Capacity, as Light is by the Eye distinguishable from Darkness.

That *God*, the Maker and Judge of all, is to be worshipped, rather than the Fictions of Human Folly. That the Worship most acceptable to him, is the *Obedience* of a virtuous and sober Life, rather than an endless Circle of mere external Ceremonies. That the Practice of *Justice*, *Righteousness*, *Meekness* and *Charity*, is much more useful to men, *than* their stirring up each other's Zeal *for* or *against opinions* of which they understand very little: These great Lines of Truth, are so plainly, so brightly conspicuous, both in Reason and Scripture, that *he who runs may read them*. Whosoever is led into any Error, contrary to these *Great and Fundamental Truths*, 'tis not by his *Understanding*, but by his *Will* that he is deceived; and therefore he is justly answerable for his Folly. *God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*, 1 Tim. ii. 4. The Light held forth to them is clear and strong; the Rules are Few and conspicuous; that an unprejudiced Person would hardly think it possible they should be mistaken. Yet so extensive is *That kind of Error* which proceeds from Wilfulness and corrupt Affections, that in opposition to these Great and plain Rules it is, that the *whole World lieth in Wickedness*, 1 Joh. v. 19. In opposition to the Evidence of This shining Light it is, that the Devotion of the *Popish* World is transferred from the God and Father of all things, and from the One only Mediator whom *He* has appointed; to Saints, and Angels, and Images, and fictitious Relicks. In opposition to the same plain and evident Truths it is, that, not in the *Popish* World only, but in too great a part even of That also which calls itself *Protestant*, mere outward and customary Forms have by Many persons a greater Stress laid upon them, than the weightier matters of the Law, Practice of True Virtue: And men generally are more concerned to support uncertain Opinions, than to promote the Habits of Justice, Goodness, Temperance, Meekness, and universal Good-will towards Mankind; upon which principally depends our Happiness in *This* World, and our Title to *That which is to come*. This is the Great Corruption, the Great and Universal Error of All Ages in matters of Religion. And they who Thus *oppose Themselves* to the Great End and Design of the Gospel, subverting the Simplicity and Purity of the doctrine of Christ; these, as well as the atheistical, debauched, and profane, are the Persons whom we ought to be continually *instructing in Meekness, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth*.

In which words of the Apostle, we may observe distinctly the following particulars. 1*st*, A supposition laid down; That *Truth* is something *real* in *itself*, and *of importance* to *Men*; something that *may* be found, and which we *ought* to seek after. 2*dly*, An Observation made concerning the corrupt state and disposition of Mankind; that Some there will always be, who *will* set themselves to *oppose* the Truth. 3*dly*, A Direction given, concerning our *Own* Duty; that we ought to *instruct* such persons, in *Meekness*. And 4*thly*, a *Reason* added, *why* we ought to do it in That manner; *if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth*.

1*st*. Here is a *Supposition* laid down; that *Truth*, is something *real* in *itself*, and *of importance* to *Men*; something that *may* be found, and which we *ought* to seek after. I have already observed, that where-ever the Scripture speaks *of Truth*, it always means *such* Truth as has relation to *Religion*; And I shall use the word in *That* sense, thro' the whole following Discourse. *All* Truth of what kind *soever* it be, is *real*; but *not* always *of importance*. *All* Truth, has its *Foundation in Nature*; but is *not* always necessary, or of any great Use for Us to know. But Truth in matters *of Religion*, is always of the greatest *importance*; as being the *Foundation* and the *Support*, *of Right Practice*. Men, upon *erroneous Principles*, may do what is Right by *Chance*; or the general *Probity* of their Temper, may over-rule the ill influence of mistaken Principles: But there can be no *certain*,

there

SERM. XLI.

there can be no *ſteddy* Rule of good Practice, without a Foundation of Truth. All *Error* is founded in *Imagination* only; 'Tis a Shadow, without a Subſtance; 'Tis generally nothing elſe, but a careleſs Following of *other* mens Opinions, or pretended Opinions; a lazy and formal Adherence to the *Cuſtoms* of the Age men live in, or the *Notions* which *happen* to prevail, like *other Faſhions*, in *particular Places*, and among certain *Sects* or *Parties* of Men. Principles of which kind, can be no better a Foundation of Practice, than mere Chance; and Religion built upon ſuch a quick-ſand, is, in the ſeveral Nations of the Earth, nothing at all more than the *Cuſtom* or *Faſhion of the Country*. Religion acceptable to *God*, who judges the Heart; muſt be, in the *Mind of* every *particular* Perſon, a Love *of Truth* and *Right*: A Love *of That* Truth and Right, not which is eſteemed ſuch upon mere vulgar and cuſtomary Acceptation, but which the Mind itſelf perceives and feels, and, upon Examination finds to be ſo in reality. Of This, the Mind of *every* uncorrupt Man, is by the Author of Nature made as competent a Judge; as the Eyes of the Body, are made fit to diſcern between Light and Darkneſs. And the Righteouſneſs of God's future Judgment, (*That Judgment* wherein men ſhall give an account of themſelves, not in the Lump by Sects and Parties, but every man ſingly and perſonally for himſelf; the Righteouſneſs, I ſay, *of that future Judgment*) muſt of neceſſity depend, upon every man's underſtanding for Himſelf the Rule he is to be judged by. *What* This Rule is, can be of no difficulty for any man to diſcover. *Natural Conſcience*, That *Original Light*, That *Candle of the Lord*, which God has implanted in every man's Breaſt, tells him always *what* it is, with regard to the *eternal Truths of Morality*: And to them who live under the Light of the *Goſpel*, the additional *Precepts* given by *Chriſt* in *Scripture*, are no leſs clear and conſpicuous. *Theſe Truths* of God, are, like an immoveable *Rock*, the Baſis and Foundation of That True Religion, which approves itſelf to every man's *Underſtanding* by clear Reaſon, and glorifies God by making Men like unto him through Virtue and Righteouſneſs in their *Practice*. All *falſe* Religions conſiſt, in *changing the Truths of God into a Lie*, Rom. i. 25. Either corrupting the Truth of God's *Creation*, by introducing into Religion things oppoſite to, or things which draw men from, the Practice of Virtue, of Juſtice, Goodneſs and Charity. Or corrupting the Truth of God's *Revelation*, by mixing with the plain ſimplicity of the Doctrine of Chriſt, Traditions and uncertain Notions of merely Human Invention. *Truth itſelf*, both *natural* and *revealed*, when ſeparate from all corruptions *of Men*, appears always with a native Luſtre and Beauty, with a Strength and Clearneſs of Reaſon, which the Scripture elegantly compares to *a* Light *ſhining in Darkneſs*; which needs no *external Force*, no *Violence or Compulſion*, no *artificial impoſing* upon the Underſtanding, (as the *Inventions of Men* do,) to cauſe it to be received and embraced; But it requires only an *unprejudiced apprehenſion*, and an *uncorrupt Will*, in order to its being entertained univerſally in the Love thereof. It always tends alſo to promote mens *true Intereſt*; their true Intereſt, as well *Temporal* as *Eternal*: The *Peace* and *Satisfaction*, of every man's own *Mind* in particular; and, in general, univerſal *Love and Good-will* towards all *Others*. For all the *Contentions* and *Animoſities*, all the *Hatred* and *Malice*, all the *Perſecution* and *Cruelties* which have ever been exerciſed in the World under Pretence of zeal for Religion; have in reality always ariſen purely upon Account of zeal for matters *of men's own* Invention, never out of concern for the plain *Laws* and *Commands of God*. And all the dark and ſlaviſh Bigottry, which has at any time tormented the Minds of particular men; has been owing to the Superſtitious Errors, wherewith the Weakneſs of Some, and the Deſigns of Others, have miſrepreſented That *Truth of God*, which the Apoſtle ſtiles *the perfect Law of Liberty*; and of which, our Saviour himſelf declares, *Joh.* viii. 32, *Ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you Free*. Not without the greateſt Reaſon therefore, is that Exhortation of the Wiſe man, *Prov.* xxiii. 23, *Buy the Truth, and ſell it not*: And ch. iv. 7, *Wiſdom is the principal thing; therefore get Wiſdom; and with all thy Getting, get Underſtanding*. St. *Paul* in like manner, *Phil.* iv. 8; in That elegant enumeration, wherein he reckons up every thing that can be thought to be excellent; and exhorts the *Philippians*, in the moſt earneſt and affectionate manner, *If there be any Virtue, if there be any Praiſe*, to *think upon* Thoſe things;

things; not without a particular Emphasis, placeth at the Head of All, in the very first rank, *Whatsoever things are* True. And this may suffice, for Explication of the *First* Particular in the Text; the *Supposition* laid down, that *Truth* is something *real* in *itself*, and of importance to *Men*; something that *may* be found, and which we *ought* to seek after. SERM. XLI.

2*dly*, The *next* Observation collected from the words of the Text, is; that such is the corrupt State and Disposition of Mankind, that *Some* there will *always be*, who will set themselves to *oppose* the Truth. Notwithstanding the Native *Excellency and Beauty of* Truth, considered *in itself*; notwithstanding the *Strength and Clearness of Reason*, with which it is generally accompanied; notwithstanding the apparent *Benefit and Advantage*, which the Knowledge of Truth always brings to Mankind; yet so little sensible are Men of the intrinsick Excellency of things, so unattentive to the Strength of the clearest Reason, so apt to be imposed upon in judging concerning their own true Interest; that nothing is more Common, than to see the plainest and most useful Truths, in matters of Religion, violently and passionately opposed.

The principal *Causes* of this Opposition; are in particular, *Ignorance*, *Carelessness*, *Prejudice*, and *Vice*.

The *First* cause of Men's setting themselves in opposition to the Light of Truth, is *Ignorance*. Meaning here, by *Ignorance*, not a bare *Want of Knowledge*: (For the natural and proper Effect *of bare Want of Knowledge*, is, that Men forbear to pass Any Judgment *at all*, upon what they understand not; and that they neither contend *for* nor *against* any opinion, before they have some *Reason* to determine them so to do:) But there is a *presumptuous* Ignorance, which *despises* Knowledge; And This makes Men *oppose* the Truth, before they understand any thing of it. Seest thou a man that *despiseth* instruction? there is more hope of a *Fool*, than of Him. Another cause of Men's opposing the Truth, is *Carelessness*. They blindly, and without any Consideration, follow the *Customs* of the Place where they happen to live; And the Knowledge of Truth, seems to them to be of no great Importance. They take up their Religion at adventures, not from the consideration of the Laws *of Nature* or *of Revelation*, but merely from the *Company* they *chance* to be educated amongst; And thus *All Religions* are put upon an equal Foot, varying according to the accidental Temper of the Persons among whom they prevail. Men of this Disposition, *careless* of finding out the Truth, and consequently having indeed no Religion at all, but barely the Name and Profession of it; generally prefer *Any degree of Ignorance*, before the carefullest *Study* either of the *Nature of Things*, or of the Laws of *God*. To This Temper 'tis palpably owing, that so many *whole Nations* at this day, *Pagans and Mahometans*, never give themselves the Trouble to enquire at all, whether the *Christian* Religion be true or no; And even among the Professors of *Christianity*, (as they think themselves to be,) many entire Nations, full of Men very Learned and of great Abilities, yet never suffer any careful Inquiry to be made, whether the Worship of imaginary Saints, and of Images of Wood and Stone, and of Relicks, and of Bread; and innumerable other Doctrines and Practices, absurd Notions and superstitious Ceremonies; they never (I say) suffer any careful Examination to be made, whether these things are agreeable to the Plainness and Simplicity, to the Holiness and Purity of Christ's Religion, or no.

A *further* Cause of Men's opposing the Truth, is *Prejudice*. They are not perhaps naturally *ignorant*; nor yet *of* so *lazy and careless* a Temper, as to oppose the Truth merely to avoid the *Trouble* of studying it. But their *Prejudices* are so strong, that the *clearest Light* cannot overcome and dissipate so thick a cloud. They have accustomed themselves to found their Belief entirely in an *implicit* Reliance upon *Other Men*; instead of building it upon the Evidence *of Things themselves*, which is the Foundation of Truth. And Then, the Traditions of the Scribes and Elders and Pharisees; the Decrees of *Popes*, or the Determinations of *Parties*, evidently governed by Worldly Motives; shall have much more Weight with them, to perswade them to *blind* or *shut* their Eyes; than the *whole Scripture of* Truth, or the strongest and *plainest Reason* in the World, shall have to perswade them to *open* them. So little do they consider Those Admonitions of our Saviour; *Search the*

SERM. XLI.

Scriptures; and, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear:* And That of St. *Paul*; *I ſpeak as unto wiſe men*, (that is, to intelligent perſons;) *judge ye what I ſay*, 1 Cor. x. 15. And of St. *Peter*, 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an Anſwer to every man that asketh you a reaſon of the Hope that is in you.*

But the *Laſt* and *Greateſt* reaſon of Men's ſetting themſelves in oppoſition to the Truth, is the *Wickedneſs* and *Corruption of* their *Manners*; the Love of unrighteouſneſs and debauchery, the Deſire of Power and Dominion, the Concern they are under for the Defence and Support of a Sect or Party, without having Any Knowledge how far they are, or are not, in the Right. Theſe are things, which make men to *ſhut their Eyes* againſt the Light, to *love* and chooſe *Darkneſs rather than Light*, and wilfully to *ſtop their Ears* againſt all the Means of being better informed. Concerning ſuch Perſons, St. *Paul* propheſies, 2 *Tim.* iii. 2, 8, *In the laſt days* —— *men ſhall be* —— *Boaſters*, —— *Deſpiſers of thoſe that are good*, —*heady, high-minded, Lovers of pleaſures more than Lovers of God, Having a Form of godlineſs, but denying the Power thereof*, ——*reſiſting the Truth, men of corrupt minds.* And theſe things *muſt be*, ſaith the ſame Apoſtle; (*i. e.* it is fit and juſt that the Providence of God ſhould *permit* it Thus to be;) *that thoſe which are approved*, (i. e. that thoſe who ſeek and obey the Truth and Simplicity of the Goſpel, ſeparate from all *worldly* and unjuſtifiable *Deſigns*,) *may be made manifeſt among you.*

1 Cor. xi. 19.

3dly, The *Third* thing obſervable in the Text, is the *Direction* given us concerning *our own* Duty; that we ought in *Meekneſs* to *inſtruct* thoſe who oppoſe themſelves againſt the Truth. He who *himſelf*, *ſuffers* for well-doing, and for the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, is ſure of being (at leaſt *ſo far*) in the *Right*: But he who does Violence to *Others*; if *they*, whom he does Violence to, be in a *right* cauſe, *He* is an Enemy to God: But if they be in the *wrong*, yet *He* diſhonours the Truth, by acting unrighteouſly for it, and not knowing what Spirit he is of. *The Servant of the Lord, muſt not ſtrive but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient. We* cannot always diſcern, *who* they are that err through *ignorance*, and *who* through a *vicious diſpoſition.* (I ſpeak not here concerning matters *of Immorality*; for Faults of *This* kind, are evident to *all* men.) But if we *could*, yet *Meekneſs* is at all *times* neceſſarily a *Fruit of the Spirit*; And we are commanded to *be patient towards* All *men*; 1 Th. v. 14; towards them that *oppoſe*, as well as towards them that are only *ignorant of*, the Truth. *Who is a wiſe man*, ſaith St. *James*, *and indued with Knowledge amongſt you? let him ſhow out of a good converſation his works with Meekneſs of Wiſdom.* For — *the Wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated.* But *Anger, reſteth in the boſom of Fools*; Eccleſ. vii. 9. And the *Wrath of Man, worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God*; Jam. i. 20: being always a *certain* Evidence, that Men are more concerned for ſome temporal Intereſt, than for the real Honour of God and Goodneſs. Men of a true Chriſtian Spirit, ſincerely deſirous to promote the Knowledge of Truth and the Practice of Virtue in the World, rather than the obtaining of Temporal Power and Dominion for themſelves are always willing to conſider, that *they themſelves* are fallible; and therefore conſtantly endeavour to convince *Others*, by the Methods of *Reaſon*, and not *of Paſſion* and *Violence. Shewing all Meekneſs unto all Men, for* that *we ourſelves alſo were ſometimes fooliſh*; Tit. iii. 2, 3. Which *Temper*, is much *more* reaſonable in point *of Truth and Error*; when, even with regard to Faults of the *Will*, St. *Paul* admoniſhes, *if a man be overtaken in a Fault*, — *reſtore ſuch a one in the Spirit of Meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf, leſt Thou alſo be tempted*, Gal. vi. 1. (He ſpeaks not of the *Crimes of Malefactors*, ſuch as muſt neceſſarily be puniſhed by the hand of *Juſtice*; But he means *ſuch* Faults as are to be cured by Reproof.) Our *Saviour himſelf*, though infallible, and could *not* err; yet was *meek and lowly in Heart*: And rebuked his Diſciples with great Severity, when once upon high provocation they diſcovered an inclination to violent Methods; *Ye know not* (ſaid he) *what manner of Spirit ye are of*, Luke ix. 55. Plainly intimating to all ſucceeding Generations, *wherein* would lie the principal Difference between the *Spirit of Chriſt* and the *Spirit of Anti-Chriſt.*

2 Tim ii. 24.

Gal. v. 23.

Jam. iii. 13.

Mat. xi. 29.

4thly and *Laſtly*; Here is in the Text annexed a *particular Reaſon*, with regard to *the Perſons to be inſtructed*; *why* our Inſtruction to them, ought always to be accompanied with Meekneſs: *If God peradventure will give them Repentance to the*

acknowledgment

SERM. XLI.

acknowledgment of the Truth. In the Original, it is; Leſt *God peradventure ſhould give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth.* The Meaning is: We are to inſtruct them with Meekneſs; leſt peradventure by our Heat and Paſſion, we raiſe in them a juſt Prejudice againſt us; when, by meek inſtruction, they *might* poſſibly have been brought to Repentance, and to the acknowledgment of the Truth; And ſo *we*, by our ill behaviour, become anſwerable for *their* miſcarriage. For, nothing can be a greater hindrance to men's being convinced, than the applying *Violence* and *Paſſion* inſtead of *Reaſon*: And nothing can give more Advantage to the Evidence of Truth, than the meek Behaviour of thoſe who profeſs it. For *This* reaſon, we ſo frequently find repeated in Scripture the following Admonitions, which may ſerve for a proper Application of this whole Diſcourſe. *Be ready always to give an Anſwer to every man that asketh you a reaſon of the Hope that is in you, with* Meekneſs *and Fear*; 1 Pet. iii. 15. *Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles*; 1 Cor. x. 32. *Walk in Wiſdom towards them that are without*; Col. iv. 5. *Have a good report of them which are without, leſt ye fall into reproach*; 1 Tim. iii. 7. *Let your Moderation*, your meek and exemplary good Spirit, *be known unto all men*; Phil. iv. 5. *Blameleſs and harmleſs, the Sons of God; without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation, among whom ye ſhine as Lights in the World*; Phil. ii. 15. *Having your converſation honeſt*, that is, of good reputation, even *among the Gentiles; that whereas they ſpeak againſt you as Evil-Doers, they may by your good works which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the day of viſitation*; 1 Pet. ii. 12. And in the words of our Saviour himſelf; *Matt.* v. 16; *Let your Light ſo ſhine before men*; the Light of your Meekneſs, Goodneſs, and Charity; the Light of your excellent Temper and univerſal Virtue; that the whole World *may ſee your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

1 Theſſ. iv. 12.

SERMON

SERMON XLII.

Of CHRIST's calling Sinners to Repentance.

MAR. ii. 17.

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole, have no need of the Physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.

SERM. XLII.

THE Occasion of these words, was briefly This. Our Lord, having called his Apostle *Matthew* from the Receipt of Custom, and the Call being immediately obeyed; he thereupon went home with the Converted Disciple, unto That Disciple's house. *And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat at his house*; (ver. 15.) *many Publicans and Sinners, of* That Disciple's former acquaintance, having followed them from the Receipt of Custom, *sat also together with Jesus and his Disciples*; our Lord being always ready, to take *every* occasion of exhorting Sinners to Repentance, and to *give* Them every opportunity of receiving such Exhortations. *But the* conceited *Scribes and Pharisees*; ver. 16; *when they saw him eating with Publicans and Sinners*; not considering, according to the Reason and Truth of things, that, not the *conversing* with Sinners, but the *partaking* with them in their *Sins*, or *incouraging* them therein, is only *faulty*; nay,

nay, that converſing with ſuch perſons, not only may be *innocent*, but, when it is in order to their Amendment, very *praiſe-worthy* alſo: The *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, I ſay, not conſidering *This*, but being full of Vanity and Pride, and valuing themſelves upon an *affected* appearance *of peculiar Holineſs*, in deſpiſing and ſetting themſelves *above* the converſation of thoſe whom in contempt they called *Publicans and Sinners*; pretended to *wonder much*, when they ſaw Jeſus ſitting at meat with perſons of That character; and asked his Diſciples, ſaying, *How is it that he eateth and drinketh with Publicans and Sinners?* Jeſus, hearing their queſtion, and knowing their Wickedneſs and Pride of Heart, replies in the Words of the Text; *They that are Whole, have no need of the Phyſician, but they that are Sick: I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* SERM. XLIII.

In diſcourſing upon which Words, I ſhall 1*ſt* draw ſome Obſervations from the ſeveral *particular* expreſſions we meet with in the Text; and 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider the *general* Doctrine *of Repentance*, as therein laid down by our Lord.

I. The *Obſervations* naturally ariſing from the ſeveral *particular* expreſſions made uſe of in the Text; are;

1*ſt*, That *Sin* is to the *Soul*, what *Diſeaſe* or *Sickneſs* is to the *Body*: The *Whole*, and they that are *Sick*, are here, in our Saviour's phraſe, the *Righteous* and the *Sinners*. And the Analogy, is very obvious and elegant. For as the *natural* Health of the *Body*, conſiſts in *This*; that every Part and Organ, regularly and duly performs its proper Function; and when any of Theſe are diſordered or perverted in their operations, there enſues Sickneſs and Diſeaſes: So likewiſe, with regard to the *Spiritual* or *Moral* State of the *Mind* and *Soul*; when every Faculty is employed in its natural and proper manner, and with a juſt direction to the end it was deſigned for; when the *Underſtanding* judges of things according to Reaſon and Truth, without partiality and without prejudice; when the *Will* is in its *actions* directed by this judgment of Right, without Obſtinacy or Wilfulneſs; and when the *Paſſions* in their due ſubordinate ſtation, and the *Appetites* under the Government of Sober intention, ſerve only to *quicken* the execution of what *Reaſon* directs; then is the Mind of Man Sound and Whole; fit for all the operations of a *rational* creature, fit for the employments of a *virtuous and religious* Life. On the contrary, the *Abuſe* or *Miſemployment of Any* of theſe Faculties, is the *Diſeaſe* or *Sickneſs* of the Soul. And when they are *All* of them perverted, *totally* and *habitually*, by a *general* corruption and depravation of Manners; then, as the *Body*, by an incapacity *of all* its organs for the Uſes *of natural Life*, *dies*, and is diſſolved; ſo the man in his *moral* capacity, by an *habitual* neglect and diſlike of all virtuous Practices, becomes (as the Scripture elegantly expreſſes it) Dead *in Treſpaſſes and Sins*. And as, in *Bodily* Diſeaſes, Some are *more* dangerous, and more likely to prove *mortal*, than Others; in which ſenſe our Saviour ſays concerning *Lazarus*, *This Sickneſs is* not *unto Death*; ch. xi. *of St. John's Goſpel*; ver. 4; So, in the *ſpiritual* ſenſe, the ſame Apoſtle St. *John*, in his 1*ſt* Epiſtle, ſpeaks of *Sins*, which, according as there be *Any* or *No Hope* of mens recovering from them, either *are* or *are not* unto *Death*; 1 Joh. v. 16.

2. A *Second Obſervation* ariſing from our Saviour's manner of expreſſing himſelf in the Text, is; that *Repentance*, is not an *Original* and *Primary* Duty of Religion; but a Duty, only of *ſecondary* intention, and of *conſequential* Obligation: Our Lord *came not to call the* Righteous, *but* Sinners *to Repentance*. The *Original* Duty of all rational Creatures, is to *obey* the Commandments of God: And *Such* intelligent Beings, as have *always* lived in obedience to God's Commands, are *not* obliged to the Duty *of Repentance*. It is *Sin* only, that brought in the obligation to this *ſecondary* and *conſequential* Duty. And to thoſe who *Have* ſinned, This Duty is *of Such a* Nature, that it is a particular *Privilege* to them to be *permitted* to perform it; *Acts* xi. 18. When the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians at *Jeruſalem*, firſt heard of the Apoſtles being *authorized* to preach the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*, they ſaid, Then *hath God alſo to the Gentiles* granted *Repentance unto life*. Granting *Repentance*, does not ſignify, as Some Moderns have underſtood it, God's *working Repentance* in *men*, or *operating it* upon *them*; but it means, his graciouſly *allowing them the* Benefit *of Repentance*, or, his accepting *their Repentance* ſo as to render it available *unto Pardon*. Among ſuch frail and degenerate Creatures, as *Men* in this *preſent*

SERM. XLII.

State are; there are *None*, in *ſtrictneſs of* Speech, *free from Sin*; and conſequently *None*, but what are obliged to this *Duty of Repentance*. Nevertheleſs, according to the gracious eſtimation of things in the Goſpel, and according to the more uſual acceptation of words in Scripture; they who, allowing for the general frailties and infirmities of human Nature, ſincerely endeavour, in the conſtant courſe and tenour of their Actions, to live in habitual Obedience to the Commands of God; are ſtiled *Righteous* in *ſuch* a manner, as that our Saviour came not, *comparatively* ſpeaking, to call *Them* to Repentance. In the Prayer of *Manaſſeh* King of *Judah*, we find this Notion expreſſed in very ſtrong Terms: *Thou, O Lord*, ſays he, *that art the God of the Juſt, haſt not appointed Repentance to the Juſt, as to Abraham and Iſaac and Jacob, which have not ſinned againſt thee; but — of thine infinite Mercies thou haſt appointed Repentance unto* Sinners, *that they may be ſaved*. The word, *Sinners*, here, it is plain, is not uſed in *That* ſenſe, wherein *All men* are declared to be Sinners; but in *That* ſenſe, wherein the Scripture declares that the *Wicked* are *an* abomination to the Lord, and them that *work iniquity* his Soul hateth. Againſt *theſe* perſons it is, that the *Wrath of God* is denounced with *indignation*, and the *Threatnings of his Law* are *thundred* with *Severity*. *The Law* (ſays St. *Paul*) *is not made for a* righteous *man*, (for *againſt ſuch, there is no law*; Gal. v. 23;) *but* it is made *for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for the ungodly and for Sinners, for the unholy and profane,--------- for man-ſlayers, for whoremongers------ for Liars, for perjured perſons, and if there be any Other thing that is contrary to ſound doctrine*. In *compariſon* with *Theſe*; men who *love Truth*, and *do Righteouſneſs*, and ſincerely *fear God*, however they be incompaſſed with many infirmities, are yet ſtiled in Scripture not only *juſt* and *righteous*, but even perfect *in their generation, walking in* All *the commandments of the Lord* blameleſs; *Iſraelites indeed, in whom there is No Guile*; *juſt perſons, that* need no Repentance: and of whom our Lord in the text declares, that he *came not to call* Them *to Repentance*. There *is* a Repentance, to which even the *Beſt* of Men are continually obliged; a Senſe of their unworthineſs before God; an acknowledgment of their Weakneſſes and Follies; a continual uninterrupted Endeavour to amend what they find amiſs in themſelves, and to improve more and more unto perfection. But *This* is *not* That Repentance, to which our Saviour came to call *Sinners*: That *Total Change* of Life and Manners, of which when our Lord ſaw an inſtance in *Zacheus*, he ſaid, This day *is Salvation come unto this Houſe*; and in deſcribing of which, he calls it a *New* Birth, a being Born again *of Water and of the Spirit*. In contradiction to which, and under the very ſame figure of expreſſion, That *perpetual* Amendment of infirmities, which is the Duty of *Good* men, may well be repreſented in the words of our Saviour to St. *Peter*; Joh. xiii. 10; *He that is waſhed, needeth not, ſave to waſh his feet, but is clean every whit*.

1 Tim. i. 9.

3. A *Third* thing obſervable in our Saviour's manner of expreſſing himſelf in the Text, is the juſt and ſharp *Reproof* contained in this his Anſwer to the Proud and Hypocritical *Phariſees*. They were *Whole*, it ſeems, and therefore had no need of a *Phyſician*; They were very *Righteous*, they thought, and therefore had no need of being invited to *Repentance*. They were the perſons, who St. *Luke* tells us, *chap.* 18. 9; *truſted in themſelves that they were righteous, and deſpiſed Others*; And therefore our Lord rebuked their Pride, by his Parable of the *Phariſee* and the *Publican*; telling them that the penitent *Publican* went down to his houſe juſtified, rather than the boaſting *Phariſee*; *For every one that exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted*. They were the ſame perſons, to whom the ſame Evangeliſt tells us our Lord ſaid upon *another* occaſion; *chap.* xvi. 15; *ye are they which juſtify yourſelves before Men, but God knoweth your Hearts; For That which is highly eſteemed amongſt Men, is abomination in the Sight of God*. And thus likewiſe in the words of the Text, when the ſame Hypocrites were finding Fault with *Jeſus*, for keeping company with Publicans and Sinners, which *They* thought it beneath *Themſelves* to do; the Anſwer he made them, contains in it this Severe Sting; *Ye* who fancy yourſelves *whole*, what need have *ye* of a Phyſician? *Ye* who truſt in yourſelves that ye *are righteous*, what need have *ye* of being invited to *Repentance*?

Theſe are the *Obſervations* naturally ariſing from the ſeveral *particular* expreſſions made uſe of in the Text. That which remains is, to conſider, in the

II. *Second*

SERM. XLII.

II. *Second* place, the general Doctrine of *Repentance*, as here laid down by our Lord: The Deſign of his Preaching, was *to call Sinners to Repentance.*

God being the *Author* and *Preſerver* of our Being, and our Supreme *Governour*; it is manifeſt that his *Will*, however made known to us, whether by *natural Reaſon*, or by additional *Revelation*, is the *Rule* and *Law* of our Actions. This *Law* or *Rule*, all men, as they are rational Creatures, are originally obliged to obey at *all times* and in *all particulars*; nor can there in *any caſe*, in the nature and reaſon of things, be *any Excuſe* or *Diſpenſation* for tranſgreſſing it. Nevertheleſs *in fact*, in this preſent ſtate, ſuch is the Frailty and Infirmity of our Nature, ſuch is the Blindneſs and Erroneouſneſs of our Underſtandings, ſuch the Falſeneſs and Corruption of our Wills, ſuch the Power and Headineſs of our Paſſions, ſuch the Influences of innumerable Temptations ſurrounding us in a degenerate and unrighteous World; that there is *no man liveth, and ſinneth not.* Now of *Sin*, in proportion to the ſeveral degrees of its aggravation, the natural and juſt *Effect* is *Fear*, and *Looking for of Judgment*, and mens being conſequently *all their Life-time ſubject to Bondage*; Heb. ii. 15. By this Fear of the Divine Diſpleaſure, joined with a Senſe of paſt Follies, and of the unreaſonableneſs of Sin in the nature of the thing itſelf; they who have in them a root of *general* good Diſpoſition, and have not been corrupted with long and fixt *Habits* of Vice, are apt to be led to *Repentance*: And the conſideration of the nature and perfections of *God*, That *Goodneſs and Mercy* which the *Light of Nature* teaches us muſt be found in the moſt perfect Being, gives them very reaſonable Grounds of *Hope*, that their Repentance and Amendment ſhall not be in vain. By Theſe conſiderations, many worthy and well-diſpoſed Minds, even in the *Heathen World* itſelf, regulated their Behaviour; and, forſaking the Corruptions of the World around them, made very great Improvements in the ways of Virtue. Nevertheleſs, ſince a man's performing his Duty for the *future*, is nothing more, but doing what is *Then* his Duty to do, and makes no Expiation for *Paſt* Offences; there could not but remain upon the Minds of Penitents ſtill *Some* Uncertainty and uneaſy Doubts. In revealing himſelf to the people of the *Jews*, God was pleaſed *by degrees* to *clear* this matter; *aſcertaining* the Hopes, and *removing* the Suſpicions of *natural Reaſon*, by expreſs *Promiſes* and *Declarations of* Mercy: Appointing *firſt*, in the *Law* itſelf, *Sacrifices* for *All* Offences, *except* the moſt *preſumptuous*: *Afterwards* ſignifying by his *Prophets*, that, upon a *real Forſaking* and *effectual Amendment* even of Preſumptuous Faults, he would accept the *Sacrifice of a broken Spirit, a broken and contrite Heart he would not deſpiſe*: Inviting men, as in the Prophecy of *Iſaiah*; ch. lv. 7; *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his Thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*: And intimating, as in the liiid chapter of the ſame Book, that he had appointed an univerſal propitiation, to be revealed in his due ſeaſon, who was to be *wounded for our Tranſgreſſions*, and *bruiſed for our Iniquities*, and *by whoſe ſtripes we ſhould be healed.* At length in the Fulneſs of Time, by the actual coming of Chriſt, this great Diſpenſation was compleatly opened; and *Repentance* and *Remiſſion of Sins*, was commanded to be preached, in *His* name, unto all the Nations of the Earth. *Come unto Me*, ſays he, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Reſt.* And again: *Let him that is athirſt, come; and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* He has given us aſſurance, that God *wills not that Any ſhould periſh, but that All ſhould come to Repentance*: Nay, that as a Shepherd rejoices over a Sheep that had been loſt; ſo *it is not the Will of our Father which is in Heaven, that One of theſe little ones ſhould periſh.* Further; that *there is joy in the preſence of the Angels of God, over One Sinner that repenteth*; Nay, that *Joy ſhall be in Heaven over One Sinner that repenteth*, more *than over ninety and nine juſt perſons that need no Repentance.* The meaning is; not that *Repentance* is in itſelf *more*, or *ſo much* valuable as *Innocence*; or that a *returning Sinner* is *more* acceptable, or *ſo much* acceptable to *God*, as One that *never Sinned*: But that, in like manner as either a man's *Self*, or his *Friend's*, having eſcaped any extraordinary and very imminent *Danger*, cauſes a greater and more ſenſible preſent *Pleaſure*, than his having never fallen into any ſuch danger at all; and yet it does not at all follow, that *Danger* is in any caſe *deſirable*: So it may very reaſonably and conſiſtently be apprehended,

SERM. XLII.

prehended; how the *Repentance* of a Sinner may cauſe greater *immediate joy* in the preſence both of Men and Angels; than the *ſteddy Perſeverance* of One who, by the regular and uniform Practice of all Virtue, has nevertheleſs deſerved a far *higher* degree of *ſettled Eſteem and Approbation*. Now This authentick declaration made by our Saviour of the acceptableneſs of True Repentance in the Sight of God; is *That Glad Tidings*, which the word *Goſpel*, [Ευαγγέλιον,] in its original Signification, properly denotes; That Publication of *Peace on Earth and Good-will towards men*, which the Angel, in his congratulation to the Shepherds, calls *Tidings of great joy which ſhall be unto all people*; and which the Apoſtle St. *Paul* ſtiles by the general name, of the *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*. The *Means*, by which the Benefit of this gracious Diſpenſation is originally applied to Sinners, is *Baptiſm*: By which, they who were converted from unrighteous ways thro' the *Apoſtles* Preaching of the Goſpel, having *their Hearts* (as the Scripture expreſſes it) *ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and their Bodies waſhed with pure Water*, received aſſurance of the Pardon of their *paſt* Sins, and entred into a Solemn obligation to obey the Commands of God for the *future*; And by which *at all times*, they who are initiated into Chriſt's Religion, are *admitted* to the gracious Terms of the Goſpel-covenant, and *obliged* to live in obedience to thoſe Terms: For the *Baptiſm* which *ſaves us*, the Apoſtle expreſly declares, is not *the putting away the filth of the fleſh*, but the Anſwer of a good *conſcience towards God*. To thoſe who *renounce* this Baptiſm by *total* and *final* Apoſtacy, the Benefit thereof is entirely vacated: For the *One Sacrifice* of Chriſt *once offered for us for ever*, being *totally and finally* rejected; *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the Adverſary*. As to thoſe who *never totally* apoſtatize, but yet, notwithſtanding their *profeſſion of Chriſtianity*, fall into the habitual practice of *Any Wickedneſs* or *Debauchery*; their Sin, without doubt, is far more inexcuſable; their Hearts more hardened; their Return to their Duty, much more difficult; than That of *ſuch Sinners* mentioned in the Text, whom our Saviour *came to call* originally *to Repentance*. For it is *better* for men *never to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them*. Nevertheleſs, even to ſuch *Offenders* as *Theſe*, however unworthy, there ſtill remains a gracious Call to Repentance; and the invitation which God has made by his Son in the Goſpel, he in abundant mercy continues to repeat. Such perſons are to be *rebuked* very *ſharply*, but not driven abſolutely to Deſpair. *That which is lame*, ought not *to be turned* quite *out of the way*, but that it *rather be healed*. St. *Paul* delivered a great Sinner *unto Satan*, to the end that *his Spirit might* finally *be ſaved in the day of the Lord:* and gives caution, *leſt* even *ſuch* an one ſhould be *ſwallowed up of much Sorrow*. He ſpeaks of many that *had ſinned already*, even in the Inſtances of great Crimes; and threatens them upon Suppoſition they had not yet *repented*. The Apoſtle St. *James* declares likewiſe; *If any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him; let him know, that He who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his ways, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a multitude of Sins*. And our Saviour himſelf, ſpeaking even of *Great Corrupters* of religion, threatens that he will *caſt them into a bed of Sickneſs, and kill their children* (that is, their Followers) *with death*, except *they repent of their Deeds*. Indeed, in caſes of *This* nature, where men, notwithſtanding their Knowledge of the Truth, have been guilty of Great and Preſumptuous Wickedneſs; their *Repentance* ought to be *very exemplary*, and their *Amendment* thoroughly and conſpicuouſly *effectual*. To *theſe* perſons, the Scripture ſays; *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your Joy to Heavineſs; Humble yourſelves in the Sight of the Lord, and he ſhall lift you up*. But for the *ſmaller* Failings, Infirmities and Surprizes, incident even to ſincere and good men through the whole courſe of their lives; for the forgiveneſs of *theſe*, there is evidently *continual* proviſion made in the *whole Tenour* of the Goſpel. Our Saviour directs us to pray *daily*, for the forgiveneſs of Treſpaſſes of *This* kind; and, by commanding us to forgive *each Other* ſuch Treſpaſſes, not only till Seven times, but even till Seventy times Seven; gives reaſon to thoſe who conſtantly and ſincerely *indeavour* to obey his Will, to hope for proportionable Favour at the hands of *God*.

The *Inferences* ariſing from the foregoing Doctrine of Repentance, are:

1*ſt*.

SERM. XLII.

1*ſt*. From what has been ſaid, appears the Folly of thoſe corrupt Practices of *Confeſſions*, *Penances*, *Abſolutions*, and the like; introduced in the Church of *Rome*, (inſtead of true Amendment of life,) by the Vanity and Ambition of Men. For the Texts, concerning *retaining and forgiving of* Sins, on a miſunderſtanding of which theſe corruptions have been founded; do not, in their true Meaning, put it into *Any* Man's power, to ſit in the Seat of God; but only appoint and authorize them *from* God, to preach and explain That Doctrine *unto* Men, by the *Terms* of which they muſt finally be judged.

2*dly*. From what has been ſaid about the nature of True Repentance, it appears; that, among *Proteſtants*, and Chriſtians of *all* denominations whatſoever; *Confeſſions of Sin*; and *profeſſions of Repentance*, made daily in our *Prayers* to God; if they be only *formal* and *ineffectual*, and produce not *real Amendment* of life; are altogether as vain and uſeleſs, as the *Popiſh* Confeſſions made to Men. For to pray continually that our *Life hereafter may be pure and holy*, and yet at the ſame time return daily to the commiſſion of *known Sins*; is the higheſt hypocriſy and mockery of God. Concerning *theſe* perſons it is, that our Saviour declares; *Luke* xiii. 24; *Many, I ſay unto you, will* Seek *to enter in, and ſhall not be able*. They will *Seek*, not in the way of true Virtue and righteouſneſs of life, but in ways which they hope may be ſubſtituted in its place. That is, in the expreſſion of our Saviour, they will build their Houſe upon the *Sand*, and not upon a *Rock*.

SERMON XLIII.

The Excellency of Moral Qualifications.

ACTS xi. 24.

For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt.

SERM. XLIII.

THERE is nothing in nature more amiable, than the character of a truly *Good* man; a Man, whoſe principal Buſineſs and Pleaſure is to make all Men eaſy, with whom he has any Concern, in the *preſent* life; and to promote, as far as in Him lies, their Happineſs likewiſe in That which is *to come*. *Other* Qualifications, have their *Value*; and do, in their proportion, merit a juſt degree of Eſteem. Great Knowledge and Abilities, every where neceſſarily command Reſpect. Great Actions never fail to fill Men with Admiration, and to procure Applauſe. But of *all* Characters, That of *Goodneſs* is the moſt *lovely*; and approaches neareſt to the Similitude of a *Divine* Perfection. *God* is the *Fountain of Goodneſs*,

Goodneſs, from which flows all the Happineſs in the whole Creation: And there is no one Perfection in the Divine Nature, which it is *ſo much* our *Duty* and our *Glory* to imitate. He who moſt excels in This particular character, has the moſt of the *Divine Likeneſs*, that Man in this Mortal ſtate can poſſibly arrive at; And therefore in the deſcription given of St. *Barnabas* in my Text, the expreſſions are uſed as Synonymous and of the *ſame* Meaning, that he was *a Good Man*, and *full of the Holy Ghoſt*. SERM. XLIII.

The *Occaſion* of the Character here given of *Barnabas*, was the *Concern and Deſire* he ſhowed, that the Benefit of True Religion might ſpread *far* in the World; that Men of *all* Nations might become partakers of the gracious Mercy of God declared in the Goſpel, by being brought to Repentance for the Remiſſion of *Sins*. *Barnabas* was the *firſt* perſon who ventured to introduce *Paul* among the Diſciples at *Jeruſalem*, immediately after his Converſion; when the reſt of the Chriſtians *were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a Diſciple*; Acts ix. 26. Afterwards, when upon occaſion of *the perſecution that aroſe about Stephen*, the Diſciples *which were ſcattered abroad* from *Jeruſalem* for fear of the *Jews* did ſome of them *ſpeak unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jeſus*; ch. xi. 19, 20. *Barnabas* was the perſon choſen to be *ſent forth* from *the Church in Jeruſalem, that he ſhould go as far as Antioch*; ver. 22. *Who when he came, and had ſeen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with Purpoſe of Heart they would cleave unto the Lord*; ver. 23. And then it follows, in the words of my Text; *For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt*.

'Tis plain this character given in the Text to *Barnabas*, was intended as a deſcription of an *excellent* perſon; of a perſon *excellent*, not ſo much upon account of his *miraculous Gifts*, as of his *Moral Qualifications*. And therefore the character deſerves to be *particularly* conſidered, as a *Pattern* and *Example* to All who are deſirous to improve in Chriſtian Virtue. For though the Diſciples of Chriſt are not *in All Ages* indued with *miraculous Powers*, yet they may and ought *always* to endeavour after thoſe *Moral Qualifications*, which are, in Scripture-language, the *Fruits of the Spirit*; and, in St. *Paul's* opinion, the *more excellent* ones too. Eph. v. 9. 1 Cor. xii. 31.

The word, *good*, in this character of a *good* man, is uſed ſometimes in a way expreſſive of *Virtue in general*, as oppoſed to *all Wickedneſs* or *Vice*; and ſometimes as denoting a *particular Kind* or *Degree* of *Virtue*, as diſtinguiſhed by way of Excellency above *other* Virtues. In the *former* ſenſe of the word, a *good man* ſtands oppoſed to a *vicious* or *bad* man: In the *latter* ſenſe, a *good man* ſtands diſtinguiſhed, by way of Eminence or Superiority, above *other* even *juſt* and *righteous* perſons.

1. The word, *Good*, is ſometimes expreſſive of *Virtue in general*, as oppoſed to *all Wickedneſs* or *Vice*. In *This* ſenſe, what *Good* is, every one knows: It needs not be defined or explained in Many Words; but every man's own Mind and Conſcience may be appealed to, to tell him *what* it is. It is not any thing that is diſputed or controverted among Men, which Some call Good, and Others Evil; but what Mankind is well agreed in, and what even the Light of Nature itſelf univerſally approves. It is *real* and *ſubſtantial* in the nature of things, ſo as not to be varied by any external Change of Time or Circumſtances: And it is *unqueſtionable* and *indiſputable*, ſo as to be acknowledged by men of all Parties and of all Opinions, how much ſoever they may differ among themſelves in Other matters, and how little Regard ſoever they may in Practice pay even to this undiſputed Goodneſs itſelf. *Whatſoever things are True, whatſoever things are Honeſt, whatſoever things are Juſt, whatſoever things are Pure, whatſoever things are Lovely, whatſoever things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praiſe*; theſe are the things, in which This *Goodneſs* conſiſts. In the *Old* Teſtament, it is thus deſcribed by the Prophet; *Mic.* vi. 8; *He hath ſhowed thee, O man, what is Good; And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* In the *New* Teſtament, Phil. iv. 8.

SERM. XLIII.

Tit. ii. 12.

Testament, it is by St. *Paul* expressed thus: that *denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World*, under a sense and expectation of a Judgment to come. And by St. *Peter* in the following manner; 1 *Pet.* iii. 10; That a Man *refrain his Tongue from evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile*; That he *eschew evil, and do good*; that he *seek peace, and ensue it*; — for *who is he that will harm you, if ye be* Thus *followers of that which is Good?* ver. 13. This *general* Practice of Virtue, which determines the person's whole character, and denominates a *Good* Man; is what our Saviour represents in his Parable under the Similitude of *Good Ground*, wherein the Seed sown takes Root and grows, and brings forth Fruit, being neither hindred by Rocks and want of depth of Earth, nor choaked with Weeds, nor scorched up and withered by the Heat of the Sun: That is, when neither Irresoluteness of Temper, nor Fear of Persecutions, nor the Temptations and Allurements of Profit or Pleasure, the Cares and Business, the Deceits or Enticements of a corrupt World, withdraw a Man from the uniform Pursuit and Practice of what is just and right. This is That *Sincerity*, or (in our Saviour's language) That *Honest*

Luke viii. 15.

and Good Heart, which in the Scripture-stile is opposed to *Hypocrisy*. For *Hypocrisy*, in the language of the sacred Writers, does not generally signify a solemn and formal *Pretence to Religion* without *Any real Belief of Religion* at all. This sort of Hypocrites, are but *Few* in number; and no Man can be guilty in *This* kind, without expressly and distinctly *condemning himself* in every part of his *own* Pretences. But the *Hypocrisy* much more frequently spoken of in Scripture, and so generally opposed to *real Goodness*; is *That* Hypocrisy, in which Men no less usually impose upon *Themselves*, than *Others*; *deceiving their own Hearts*, as St. *James* expresses it; ch. i. 26. It is *That* Deceit, by which Men fancy that they can become acceptable to God, by any external Profession of Religion, by Zeal for particular uncertain Opinions, by an exact Observation of any outward Ceremonies, by constant Devotion even towards God himself; without becoming really *Good Men*; without governing their own unreasonable Passions; without being just, beneficent, and charitable, towards all Mankind; in a word, without living in the Practice of those Moral Virtues, which are the eternal and unalterable Commands of God, and which are the ultimate End of every religious Institution. The only *Evidence* therefore, or certain *Mark*, whereby That *Sincerity* which denominates a really *Good Man*, can be distinguished from such Profession of Religion, as the Scripture deems hypocritical; is when the Fruits of it appear in a *general* and *habitual* Influence over *all* his Actions: When the Arguments of Reason and Religion, are not only heard with Pleasure, and produce perhaps sudden and real Effects, in the Times and Places of publick Devotion; (which is what our Saviour expresses by *receiving* the *Word with joy*, like Seed speedily springing up in shallow ground, without having *Root* in itself;) But the true Evidence of *Sincere Goodness* is, when the Considerations of Reason and Religion influence Men habitually in the whole Course and Method of *Common Life*, in their *Business* and *Transactions* of all kinds, in their very *Freedoms* and *Diversions* themselves, in circumstances of *Temptation*, and in Cases attended with *Difficulties*, as well as in Seasons of professed Devotion: When the Precepts of Virtue, and the Doctrines of Practice, which true Religion teaches, are *imbibed*, *digested*, and converted as it were into the *Food and Nourishment* of Life: Which is what our Saviour, in the *Sixth* chapter of *St. John*, calls *eating his Flesh, and drinking his Blood*: Just in the same sense, as *Wisdom* is introduced speaking; *Eccluſ.* xxiv. 21; *He that eateth me, shall yet be Hungry*; *and He that drinketh me, shall yet be Thirsty.*

2. Besides this *larger* and more usual Sense of the word, *Good*, expressing *Virtue in general*, as opposed to *all Wickedness* or *Vice*; there is *another* sense of the word, as denoting a *particular Kind* or *Degree* of *Virtue*, by way of Excellency above *other* Virtues. And in *This* sense, a *good* man stands distinguished,

tinguiſhed, by way of Eminence or Superiority, above *other* even *juſt* and *righteous* perſons. *Goodneſs* in *This* ſenſe, is univerſal Virtue, joined with a *ſingular* degree of *Benignity* and *Beneficence* in *particular*.

In the deſcribing or taking account of Actions; the phraſe, *doing* of *Good*, is frequently applied *peculiarly* to the Virtue of *Beneficence* or *Charity*. Thus *Heb.* xiii. 16; *To do good, and to communicate, forget not.* Again; 1 *Tim.* vi. 17; *Charge them who are Rich in This world,* —— *that they do Good, that they be rich in Good Works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate.* And from hence, in the Characters of Perſons, a *Good man* very often ſignifies, not only One who leads *in general* a *virtuous* Life, but who moreover is *particularly* eminent for *Benignity* of Temper; One who always *does more for* the Benefit of Others, than could in ſtrictneſs of juſtice be demanded of him; and *exacts leſs* for himſelf *from* Others, than in ſtrict Right appears to be his due; and readily takes *greater Pains* for his Neighbour's Advantage, and voluntarily undergoes *more Troubles and Difficulties* for the Good of Mankind, than, according to the common Meaſures and Eſtimation of Duty, he could be underſtood to be obliged to. Concerning *This* Character it is, that St. *Paul* declares, *Rom.* v. 7; *Scarcely for a Righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a Good man, ſome would even dare to die.* And in *This ſenſe*, the character of *Good* ſeems to be given to *Barnabas* in the Text. *He* was the perſon who *firſt* ventured to introduce *Paul* among the Diſciples at *Jeruſalem*, when the reſt *were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a Diſciple*; ch. ix. 26. And *He* being the perſon choſen by the Church at *Jeruſalem*, to travel as far as *Antioch*, and confirm the Faith of thoſe *Grecian* or *Gentile* Converts, which had been brought over to Chriſtianity by the preaching of Some of thoſe Diſciples, who, upon the Perſecution that aroſe about *Stephen*, were *ſcattered abroad from Jeruſalem* for fear of the *Jews*; he performed this Office with a ſingularly *good* and *charitable* Concern for the Happineſs of Mankind. Having *ſeen the Grace of God*, that is, having ſeen Evidences of God's univerſal Mercy and Compaſſion towards the *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, he *was glad, and exhorted them All, that with Purpoſe of Heart they would cleave unto the Lord*; ch. xi. 23: *For he was a Good man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt.*

Concerning the *latter* part of This character, *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, it is to be obſerved, that the *Holy Ghoſt*, in Scripture-language, ſometimes ſignifies the *Perſon* of the Holy Ghoſt, ſometimes his *Miraculous Gifts*, and ſometimes the *Moral* Effects and Influences of the Doctrine delivered to us by the Spirit of God. In either of the *two former* ſenſes, a Prophet is ſpoken of as being *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, when he is actually *inſpired* by him, or miraculouſly *conducted and directed* by him either in *Words* or *Actions*. Thus *Jeſus, being full of the Holy Ghoſt, was led by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs*; Luke iv. 1: And *Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghoſt,* — *ſaw the Glory* of *God*; Acts vii. 55. In the *latter* ſenſe of the word, a man is then ſaid to be *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, when his mind, under the *Moral* Influences of the Spirit of God, and of *the Doctrine which is according to Godlineſs*, is, in an eminent manner, zealous for the promoting of Truth, and for the Practice of good Works. Thus the Seven Deacons appointed by the Apoſtles; *Acts* vi. 3: were *men of honeſt Report, full of the Holy Ghoſt and Wiſdom*; Men of *honeſt Report*, that is, of known integrity, of virtuous and upright character, and of exemplary Zeal. And in the ſame ſenſe, *Barnabas* is in my Text deſcribed to have been a *Good man, Full of the Holy Ghoſt and of Faith.* Upon a like account, and after the ſame manner of ſpeaking, very *wicked perſons*, or men intending to attempt any very *wicked enterprize*, are in Scripture repreſented as being *filled* with the Evil *Spirit*. Thus when *Ananias* had projected within himſelf to *defraud* the Apoſtles, St. *Peter* reproves him in the following manner; *Acts* v. 3; *Why hath* Satan *filled thine Heart, to lie to the Holy Ghoſt?* And when *Judas* reſolved in his own Mind to betray our Lord; then, the Evangeliſt tells us, *Satan*

1 Tim. vi. 3.

SERM. XLIII.

entered into him, *Luke* xxii. 3. The Meaning of which is not, that the *Thoughts* of the *Men*, were the *Actions* of the *Devil*; But, that ſubmitting to Temptation upon *ill* Principles, is being ſubject to the *Devil*; in like manner as acting upon *good* Principles, is being under the Government of *God*, under the guidance and influence of the *Spirit of Holineſs*.

The words of the Text being thus explained, it is obvious from thence to obſerve,

1*ſt*, That, with regard to a perſon's *moral* or *religious* character; being a *good man*, and being *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, are *one* and the *ſame* thing. With regard to the viſible *Works* or *Operations* of the *Holy Ghoſt*, the caſe
1 Cor. xiii. 1. is very different. A man might *ſpeak with the tongues of Men, and of Angels*; might *have the Gift of Prophecy*; might *underſtand all Myſteries and all Knowledge*; might *have all Faith, ſo that he could remove Mountains*; and yet poſſibly at the ſame time, for want of real Goodneſs and true Virtue, might, in the *religious* eſtimation of things, be (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it) abſolutely *Nothing*. And our *Saviour himſelf* expreſly mentions Some, who
Matt. vii. 21. ſhould be able to plead that they *had propheſied in his name, and in his Name had caſt out Devils, and in his Name done many wonderful works*; and yet, ſaith he, *will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity*. The *Reaſon* of the difference, is plain: Becauſe theſe *external* miraculous Works of the Holy Ghoſt, being of Uſe *only* for the *conviction* of men's *Underſtandings*, which is not neceſſarily followed with a *virtuous* diſpoſition of the *Will*; hence theſe *outward Gifts* may very poſſibly be found in an *unrighteous* perſon, who is not himſelf influenced in his *own Practice* by the Arguments wherewith he preaches to *Others*. But the *internal* Effects of the influence of the Spirit of God upon the perſon's *own Mind*; the Moral Effects of the *Motives and Arguments of Religion* taught by the Holy Ghoſt, and of the *Aſſiſtances* afforded by him; theſe cannot poſſibly be *ſeparate* or *different* from true *Virtue*, becauſe Virtue is itſelf *eſſentially* the End of Religion, and the ultimate Deſign of all religious Influences. And therefore to be in *This* ſenſe *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, and to be *a good man*, muſt neceſſarily be *one* and the *ſame thing*.

2*dly*, From what has been ſaid, we may obſerve; that *moral Virtues*, and what the Scripture calls the *Fruits of the Spirit*, are *one and the ſame thing* under different Denominations. *The Fruit of the Spirit*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *is in all Goodneſs and Righteouſneſs and Truth*; Eph. v. 9. And again; *Gal.* v. 22; *The Fruit of the Spirit, is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith* [Fidelity,] *Meekneſs, Temperance; Againſt Such, there is no Law*. Theſe things, when conſidered in *themſelves*, in their own *abſolute* and *intrinſick nature*, as being *Diſpoſitions* of Mind *eſſentially* and unalterably *good*; are ſtiled *Virtues*. When conſidered with regard to their *Effects*, in the viſible *Actions* and *Practice* of *men*; they are called *Morality*. When conſidered with reſpect to the *Root* or *Spring*, the *Fountain* or *Principle* from which they flow; namely, a right *Senſe* of the *Reaſon* and *Truth* of Things, and a juſt Regard to *God* the Judge of all; they are then ſtiled *Religion*. Laſtly, when conſidered with reſpect to the *extraordinary* Supports they receive from the Revelation of the *Goſpel* in particular, as being therein explained with *clearer* and more *diſtinct* Declarations, inforced with *ſtronger* and more *powerful* Motives, encouraged and promoted with all the *Helps* and *Aſſiſtances* of the *Spirit of God*; in *This* reſpect, they are called *Fruits of the Spirit*.

3*dly*, By This Rule therefore, may eaſily be diſcovered and reproved, every kind of *Enthuſiaſm* and *Superſtition*. Whatever tends not to *promote* real Virtue and Goodneſs; much more, whatever (under the appearance of Religion) tends to *deſtroy* Virtue and Goodneſs; is the Produce either of *Atheiſm*, or of *Enthuſiaſm* and *Superſtition*. The *Spirit of God*, is the *Spirit of Holineſs* and *Goodneſs*; and therefore whoſoever lives in the Practice of *Any Vice*, is certainly, in the *religious* ſenſe, *void* of *the Spirit of God*. All

other

other Marks whatſoever, of *having the Spirit*; are but *vain* and *enthuſiaſtical*. If a man could *ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and Angels*, (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it,) and *had all Faith*, ſo that he could work *All Miracles*; and be not a *virtuous* man; All This would be only the Operation of the Spirit of God *by* Him, for the conviction of *Others*; but *To* himſelf, of no Advantage, any more than to a *Sounding Braſs* or a *tinkling Cymbal*. SERM. XLIII.

SERMON

SERMON XLIV.

Of HUMILITY.

LUK. xiv. 11.

For whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.

SERM. XLIV.

THERE is no Virtue in human Life, of more univerſal Uſefulneſs than *Humility*; and yet none more difficult to be *practiſed* by a man's *ſelf*, or to be rightly *ſtated* and defined to *others*. *Pride* grows upon Men inſenſibly by imperceptible degrees, and creeps in untaken notice of upon innumerable Occaſions, and veils itſelf often under an affected Appearance even of *Humility* itſelf. For *true Humility*, as it is hard to define, ſo it is not always eaſy to know when a man has it: And whilſt it is frequently deſcribed to be man's having in appearance a meaner Opinion of himſelf, than it is *poſſible* for him

him to have in reality; (for no man can *really think that* of himſelf, which he *knows* at the ſame time *not to be true* of himſelf;) it happens, not uncommonly, that there may be great *Pride*, in a man's *pretending ſo* to think of himſelf, as he knows every body believes there is no juſt reaſon to think of him; and that there may be more and truer *Humility* in *Another* perſon, who without either *affected Humility* or *real Pride*, ſo thinks of himſelf, as he ought to think, and ſo behaves himſelf as becomes his proper Station and Imployment in the World. For *true Humility* conſiſts, not in *Imagination*, but in *Action*; not in men's *appearing* to *think ill* of themſelves, but in *behaving* themſelves *well*; it conſiſts in carrying themſelves modeſtly in the Performance of their preſent Duty, not aſſuming to themſelves any thing above the character of their proper Station, not putting *themſelves* forward in an eager and indecent manner, but, by the Practice of real and uſeful Virtues, cauſing *Others* to be deſirous of their Advancement in the World. This is the Behaviour of True Merit; and the Method, which, in the Nature of Things, in the Judgment of the Wiſeſt Men, and by the Appointment of God himſelf, leads modeſt and unaffected Virtue, to real Honour, and to a ſettled and eſtabliſhed Eſteem. *For whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.* In the following Diſcourſe upon which Words, I ſhall 1*ſt* endeavour to ſhow *what* True *Humility* is, and wherein it conſiſts; and 2*dly*, propoſe ſome Arguments to perſwade men to the Practice of it. Under which *ſame* Heads, it will appear at the ſame Time what *Pride* is, and by what Arguments men are to be warned againſt falling into it.

SERM. XLIV.

1*ſt*, I am to conſider *what* True *Humility* is, and wherein it conſiſts. And here, becauſe the Circumſtances of men are infinitely various; and the Practice of every moral Virtue, is diverſifyed in as many different manners, as the Circumſtances of the Caſe wherein it is to be exerciſed; therefore either *general* Rules cannot be given at all, or, if they be, yet commonly they are but of ſmall Uſe, becauſe they are loſt in the endleſs diverſity of the Application. On the other Hand, *particular* Rules for every ſingle Caſe, are as impoſſible to be laid down; becauſe their *Number* would wholly confound the Memory, and ſo become incapable of being applied at all. The middle and moſt uſeful Way, is to mention the principal Heads only; which being Few, are eaſy to be remembered; and yet to which all the reſt, that are numberleſs, may with eaſe be occaſionally reduced in Practice. In order therefore to explain diſtinctly and intelligibly, what true *Humility* is; it may be proper to conſider it, with regard to the *Perſons* towards whom it is to be exerciſed, and with regard to the *Things* wherein thoſe Perſons differ ſeverally from each other. The *Perſons*, in our behaviour towards whom the Virtue of *Humility* is to be exerciſed, are either *Superiours*, *Equals*, or *Inferiours*: and the *Things* wherein theſe ſeveral Perſons differ principally from each other, are either their Civil *Stations* in the World, their different Natural *Abilities*, or their Religious *Improvements*.

1*ſt*, With regard to *Superiours* in *general*, true *Humility* conſiſts in paying them *cheerfully and readily* all due Honour and Reſpect, in thoſe *particular Regards wherein* they are our Superiours, notwithſtanding any *other* accidental Diſadvantages on *their* ſide, or Advantages on *ours*. More particularly; with regard to Superiours in Civil *Stations* in the World, true *Humility* conſiſts, in obeying them willingly in all things juſt and lawful; in ſubmitting to the Authority, even of the froward and unworthy; in not deſpiſing their Perſons, expoſing their Weakneſſes, or inſulting over their Infirmities; but being truly ſenſible, that thoſe of Us who think beſt of our own Abilities, might, in higher Stations, and under greater Truſts, find Difficulties we are not at preſent aware of; and very poſſibly not be able to ſee, or at leaſt not find means to avoid, the Frailties we are generally ſo apt to cenſure in the Behaviour of our Superiours. With regard to Superiours in Natural *Abilities*, true Humility conſiſts, not in ſubmitting our Underſtandings to them blindly and implicitly, but in being willing and deſirous to be inſtructed and informed by them; in not envying them the Advantages God has given them above ourſelves; nor repining, but on the contrary *rejoicing*, at their being preferred or honoured, according to the Proportion of their true Merit or Capacity. With regard to ſuperiours in Religious *Improvements*, Humili-

SERM. XLIV.

ty consists likewise, in *rejoicing* to see the Practice of Virtue, and the Advancement of the Kingdom of God upon Earth; not grieving, but taking Pleasure, to find such Persons esteemed highly in the World, and proposing them to ourselves as Examples and Patterns for our Imitation. This is the Virtue of Humility, in our Behaviour towards *Superiours* of all kinds.

2*dly*, Towards our *Equals*, true Humility consists, in civil and affable, in courteous and modest behaviour; not in formal Pretences of thinking very meanly and contemptibly of ourselves; (for such Professions are often very consistent with great Pride,) but in patiently permitting our equals (when it shall so happen) to be preferred before us, not thinking ourselves injured when Others but of equal Merit chance to be more esteemed, but on the contrary rather suspecting that we judge too favourably of ourselves, and therefore modestly desiring that those who are reputed upon the level with us, may have shown unto them rather a greater Respect. This is what the Apostle means; *Rom.* xii. 10; when he bids us *be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour* preferring *one another.* 'Tis what the Wise-man had long before exhorted to; *Prov.* xxv. 6; *Put not forth thyself in the presence of the King, and stand not in the place of great men; For better is it, that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of the Prince whom thine eyes have seen.* 'Tis what our Saviour still more largely and distinctly recommends, in that Parable whereof the Text is the conclusion; St. *Luk.* xiv. 7; *He put forth a Parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee, Give This Man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room: But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee:* The Application of all which, he subjoins in the words of the Text; ver. 11; *For whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.* Further; True Humility with regard to our Equals, consists, in willingly submitting, for Peace sake, to many things, if *not* very *unreasonable*, yet otherwise such as in our own judgment we should not chuse or think best of. *Eph.* iv. 1; *I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;* —— For *unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the Gift of Christ*; i. e. men have different judgments, different inclinations, different Gifts and Talents from God, divided to every one severally as he pleases; and therefore; to prevent Confusion, where men otherwise are Equals, the Duty of Humility requires, that they should all be ready to submit to each other, with all Meekness, Patience and Good-will. *Col.* iii. 12; *Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another;* —— *And above all these things, put on Charity, which is the bond of Perfectness*; Charity, *i. e.* mutual Love and an affectionate desire of Peace and Agreement; For so it is explained in the words next immediately following; *And let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to which also ye are called in one Body.* The like Exhortation we find; 1 *Pet.* v. 5; where the Apostle not only directs, *Ye Younger, submit yourselves unto the Elder*; but he adds moreover, *Yea*, all *of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with Humility.* And *Eph.* v. 21; *Submitting yourselves one to another in the Fear of God.* This is the Character of true *Humility*, in our Behaviour towards our *Equals.*

3*dly*; With regard to our *Inferiours*, Humility consists, in assuming to ourselves no more than the Difference of Men's Circumstances, and the Performance of their respective Duties, for preserving the regularity and good Order of the World, necessarily requires. Particularly, towards Inferiours in Civil *Stations* in the World, the Humility of a Governour consists, not in making his Authority despicable and subject to contempt, but in exercising it so, as to show that he is not puft up with the Love of Power and Dominion, but looks upon it as a

Trust

Truſt committed to him, for the Benefit of thoſe who are placed under his In- SERM.
ſpection. He commands, without inſulting; he reproves, with meekneſs; he XLIV.
puniſhes unwillingly, and never without giving evidence of Pity and Compaſſion. With regard to Inferiours in natural *Abilities* or Accidental *Advantages* in the World, ſuch as Learning and Knowledge, Riches, Plenty, and the like; Humility conſiſts, in not deſpiſing and contemning thoſe, upon whom God has been pleaſed to beſtow fewer Talents; but on the contrary in conſidering, that poſſibly *they* have ſome *other* Gifts, which may be wanting in *us*; and in being willing to *communicate* to *them*, the Advantages *we* enjoy; that *They* may be the better, for the Things wherewith God has bleſſed *Us*. The true Humility of a *rich man* conſiſts, not in levelling himſelf with the Poor, but in being willing to aſſiſt them by relieving their Neceſſities: not in confounding the Diſtinctions of Men's Condition, which God and Nature has eſtabliſhed; but in endeavouring to make the condition of the Meaneſt eaſy, and ſupportable to themſelves. And in like manner, the true Humility of Perſons endued with more *Learning and Knowledge* than others, does not conſiſt in making a Show of being ignorant (which may be a conceited Vanity or fooliſh Affectation;) but it conſiſts in being willing to *communicate* what they know, and in ſincerely deſiring that all Others might attain the ſame Knowledge with themſelves: After the example of *Moſes*, who, inſtead of becoming haughty and inſolent through the multitude of the Revelations wherewith God had been pleaſed to honour him; and inſtead of diſcouraging others, from ſeeking after the like Knowledge; on the contrary declared publickly; *Numb.* xi. 29; *Would God that* All *the Lord's people were Prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.* Laſtly, Towards our Inferiours in reſpect of Religious *Improvements*, true Humility conſiſts, in being rightly ſenſible of our *own many* Infirmities, even *thoſe* of Us who may be apt to imagine ourſelves to have made the *greateſt* Improvements; and in being ſincerely ſollicitous, for the welfare, and the Salvation of All men; *Let nothing be done through Strife or Vain-glory, but in Lowlineſs of Mind let each one eſteem other better than themſelves; Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of Others*; Phil. ii. 3. It conſiſts, in endeavouring to influence Men towards Religion, by *Meekneſs* rather than by *Power: Jeſus called his Diſciples unto him, and ſaid; Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles, exerciſe Dominion over them; and they that are great, exerciſe Authority upon them: But it ſhall not be ſo among you; but whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your Miniſter; And whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant; Even as the Son of Man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for many*; St. Matt. xx. 25. It conſiſts, in not affecting to gain the empty *Applauſe* of Men, by an outward oſtentation of greater Piety than others: *All their Works*, They *do*, (ſays our Saviour, ſpeaking of the proud Phariſees,) *they do for to be ſeen of men; They make broad their Phylacteries, and inlarge the borders of their garments; And love the uppermoſt rooms at feaſts, and the chief Seats in the Synagogues; And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi; But be not ye called, Rabbi; for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt; and all ye are brethren: And call no man your Father upon Earth; For One is your Father, which is in Heaven: Neither be ye called, Maſters; For One is your Maſter, even Chriſt; But he that is greateſt among you, ſhall be your Servant: And whoſoever ſhall exalt himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that ſhall humble himſelf, ſhall be exalted*; St. Matt. xxiii. 4. It conſiſts, in *condeſcending* to thoſe beneath us, and not diſdaining even to *yield* to them in things indifferent; *Be of the ſame mind one towards another; Mind not high things, but condeſcend to men of low eſtate: Be not wiſe in your own Conceits*; Rom. xii. 16. It conſiſts, in *bearing* their infirmities patiently and without frowardneſs; *We then that are ſtrong, ought to bear the infirmities of the Weak, and not to pleaſe ourſelves: Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour, for his Good to Edification: For even* Chriſt *pleaſed not himſelf*; Rom. xv. 1. It conſiſts, in *forbearing* to *judge* or *deſpiſe* thoſe that differ from us in Opinion; *Let not him that eateth, deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth*; Rom. xiv. 3. It conſiſts, in taking care not to *offend*, by haughty and preſumptuous behaviour, ſuch perſons as by Meekneſs might be prevailed upon to believe in Chriſt, or ſuch as by kind treatment

might

SERM. XLIV.

might be kept from departing into Diviſions; *Take heed, that ye* deſpiſe *not one of theſe little ones*; For *whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the Sea*; St. Matt. xviii. 10, 6. It conſiſts, in taking heed not to *impoſe* needleſs *Difficulties* upon thoſe under our Power; For ſo our Saviour deſcribes the Pride of the Phariſees; *They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born, and lay them on men's ſhoulders; but they themſelves will not move them with one of their Fingers*; St. Matt. xxiii. 4; and 1 Pet. v. 3; *Neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but being Examples to the Flock*: Laſtly, it conſiſts in uſing great *gentleneſs*, even to thoſe that *have offended*; *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a Fault, ye, which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch a one in the Spirit of Meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf, leſt Thou alſo be tempted*, Gal. vi. 1. And 2 Tim. ii. 25; *In* Meekneſs *inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure would give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth*. Theſe are the Characters and the Inſtances of True *Humility*, with regard to our Inferiours in Religious *Improvements*; which was the *laſt* of thoſe Caſes or Circumſtances, wherein for diſtinctneſs ſake, I propoſed to conſider This excellent Virtue. And indeed there are No caſes, wherein the Practice of Humility is more difficult or more intricate, than when men are tempted to Spiritual *Pride*, or to *deſpiſe* thoſe who are ſuppoſed to be their Inferiours in *religious* improvements. Which Vice inſinuating itſelf into men upon *different* occaſions, and branching forth itſelf into *many* Inſtances; a briet mentioning ſome of the principal of them, may aſſiſt us ſtill further in underſtanding the nature of the contrary Virtue. And *1ſt*, there is a *ſpiritual Pride* in *preſuming* to ſin, upon the Senſe of the Virtues we are in other reſpects indued with. This was the Caſe of *Uzziah* King of *Judah*; of whom the Scripture relates; 2 Chr. xxvi. 4, 16; that *he did that which was right in the Sight of the Lord, according to all that his Father had done, And he ſought God in the days of Zechariah, who had underſtanding in the Viſions of God*; ——— *and God made him to proſper*: —— *But when he was ſtrong, his heart was* lifted up *to his deſtruction; for he tranſgreſſed againſt the Lord his God*. The ſame was in ſome degree the caſe of *Hezekiah*, who having ſerved the Lord diligently, beyond all that his Fathers had done; and having been accordingly bleſſed with great Proſperity; yet at length he *rendred not again according to the Benefits done unto him*; *For his Heart was* lifted up; *Therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jeruſalem*; 2 Chr. xxxii. 25. And This is a Fault ſo incident even to otherwiſe *good* men, that St. *Paul* declares even concerning *himſelf*; 2 Cor. xii. 7; *Leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the Abundance of the Revelations, there was given to me a Thorn in the Fleſh*, an Affliction, *the meſſenger of Satan to buffet me, leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure*. The Duty of *Humility* in *This* caſe, conſiſts, in being always ſenſible of our Fallibility and our Danger; in *working out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; even when we think we *ſtand* ſureſt, yet *taking heed leſt* we *fall*; being (as the Prophet expreſſes it; *Iſ.* lxvi. 2.) *of a poor and contrite Spirit, and trembling at God's Word*. 2*dly*, There is a *ſpiritual Pride* of *Vain-glory*, in affecting a *publick Appearance* of ſuch Actions, as in themſelves are good and commendable. This was the great Fault of the Phariſees; who *loved to go in long-clothing, and loved ſalutations in the market-places, and the chief Seats in the Synagogues, and the uppermoſt rooms at feaſts*; who *when* they gave *their Alms, ſounded a trumpet before* them *in the ſynagogues and in the ſtreets, that they* might *have glory of men*; and when *they prayed*, did it *ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and in the corners of the ſtreets, that they* might *be ſeen of Men*; and *when* they *faſted*, put on *a ſad Countenance, and diſfigured their Faces, that they might appear unto men to faſt*. In oppoſition to This, true Humility conſiſts, in being contented to let the World be ignorant of the particular good Works we do; in ſo diſpoſing our Alms, as *not to let our left hand know what our right hand does*; and in avoiding all Affectation, and publick Boaſting, of our private Virtues. All which nevertheleſs, is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with that *other* Precept of our Saviour, of *letting our Light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven*; that, on the contrary, there is no greater and more effectual recommendation of Virtue, to the imitation of *reaſonable* and *well-diſpoſed* Perſons; than when they find it ſincerely unaffected, and which *vaunteth not it ſelf*. 3*dly*;

Mar. xii. 38.

Matt. vi. 2. vi. 5. vi. 16.

There

SERM. XLIV.

There is a *ſpiritual Pride*, of men *confidently juſtifying themſelves*, and being wholly inſenſible of their *own* Failings, while they are very cenſorious in *judging* and *deſpiſing* others. Of This, our Saviour gives us an excellent inſtance, St. Luke xviii. 9. *And he ſpake this Parable unto certain which truſted in themſelves that they were righteous, and deſpiſed others; Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Phariſee, and the other a Publican: The Phariſee ſtood and prayed thus with himſelf, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this publican: I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs: And the Publican ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his Eyes to Heaven, but ſmote upon his Breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me a Sinner: I tell you,* ſays our Saviour, *this man went down to his houſe juſtified rather than the other; For every one that exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.* The ſame Sort of Pride, is deſcribed by the Wiſe-man; Prov. xxx. 12: *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not waſhed from their filthineſs; There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes, and their eye-lids are lifted up.* Again, by our Saviour; St. Luke xvi. 15; *Ye are they which juſtify yourſelves before men, but God knoweth your Hearts; for that which is highly eſteemed among men, is abomination in the ſight of God.* And by St. *Paul*; 2 Cor. x. 12; *We dare not make ourſelves of the number, or compare ourſelves with ſome that commend themſelves; but they meaſuring themſelves by themſelves, and comparing themſelves amongſt themſelves are not wiſe: But* we *will not boaſt of things without our meaſure;* —— *For not he that commendeth himſelf is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.* And Gal. vi. 3; *If a man think himſelf to be ſomething, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himſelf.* And again, by our Saviour himſelf; *Rev.* iii. 17; *Thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched and miſerable and poor and blind and naked*: ſpeaking of a corrupt and proſperous ſtate of the Church. The *Humility* oppoſite to *This* ſort of Pride, is that of St. *Paul*; 1 Cor. iv. 4; *I know nothing by myſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* And *Phil.* iii. 12; *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;* —— *but this One thing I do; forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.* And that of *Job*; ch. ix. 20; and ch. xlii. 6; *If I juſtify myſelf, my own mouth ſhall condemn me; if I ſay, I am perfect, it ſhall alſo prove me perverſe;* —— *Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.* The meaning of all which, is; not that good men ſhould ſpeak or *think* of themſelves, in the ſame manner and ſenſe as wicked men ought to do; but that when they conſider the infinite purity of God and the perfection of his law, they ſhould then humble themſelves in a deep ſenſe of their own many Follies and imperfections. 4*thly*; There is ſtill a *further* degree of *ſpiritual Pride*, in pretending to *Merit* at the hands of God; as thoſe of the Church of *Rome* have preſumptuouſly aſſumed to themſelves to do. And in oppoſition to *This* ſort of Pride, Humility conſiſts in that Diſpoſition of Mind, which is recorded of the good *Centurion*; St. Luke vii. 6; and Mat. viii. 8. *Lord, I am not worthy,* (I have no claim, no pretence to expect,) *that thou ſhouldſt come under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I my ſelf worthy to come unto thee; but ſpeak the word, and my Servant ſhall be healed.* And of St. *Paul*; Eph. iii. 8; *Unto me, who am leſs than the leaſt of all Saints, is this Grace given*; The expreſſion is hyperbolical; But the meaning is, that he had not any the leaſt claim of Right or Deſert to that ſingular Favour, of being made the Apoſtle to the *Gentiles*. And in like manner, of *Abraham*; Gen. xviii. 27. *I have taken upon me to ſpeak unto the Lord, which am but duſt and Aſhes.* And *of Jacob*; Gen. xxxii. 10; *I am not worthy of the leaſt of all thy Mercies.* And accordingly our Saviour directs his Diſciples; St. *Luke* xvii. 10; *When ye ſhall have done all thoſe things which are commanded you, ſay, We are unprofitable Servants; we have done that which was our Duty to do.* Nevertheleſs, upon This Head of *Merit*, it is alſo to be obſerved, that there is a Fault even in the *contrary* Extreme; a pretended *Humility*, in imagining, that as we cannot *Merit*, ſo neither are we able to *Do* any thing, but muſt leave the Grace of God to do All for us. Which opinion, does as effectually deſtroy Religion in *one* extreme, as the doctrine of *Merit* does in the *other*. For, as, accord-

SERM. XLIV.

ing to the Doctrine of *Merit*, the *Reward* is not of *Grace*, but by *Claim of Right*; ſo on the other ſide, if we are able to *do nothing at all*, then the *Puniſhment* cannot be by *Juſtice*, but by mere *arbitrary Power*, which is inconſiſtent with the Attributes of God. *5thly*, There is yet a *higher* degree of this *Spiritual Pride*, in pretending to Works of *Supererogation*. This alſo is a fond Pretence of the Church of *Rome*. And This ſeems to have been the Fault of the Young man in the Goſpel; who, when our Saviour had ſaid unto him, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments*; would needs reply further; St. *Matt.* xix. 20; *What lack I yet?* This alſo is what St. *Paul* ſo juſtly reproves; *Col.* ii 18; *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worſhipping of Angels, intruding into thoſe things which he hath not ſeen, vainly puft up by his fleſhly mind*; — *which things have indeed a* Show *of Wiſdom, in will-worſhip and humility*: But *True* humility, in oppoſition to this falſe and *proud* appearance of it, conſiſts, in making, not our *own* Will, but the *Will of God*, the Rule of our Duty; *caſting down imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God*; *and bringing into captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Chriſt*, not, *of Men* but, *of Chriſt*. *Laſtly*, There is a *Spiritual Pride*, in ſeeking after and being fond of myſterious *and ſecret things*, to the neglect of our *plain* and manifeſt Duty; In alluſion to which, the corrupt Church in the *Revelations*, is ſtiled, *Myſtery, Babylon the Great*. And in oppoſition to This, *true Humility* is that which the Wiſeman deſcribes; *Prov.* iii. 7; *Be not wiſe in thine own eyes*; *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil*: And *Moſes*, *Deut.* xxix. 29; *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God*; *but thoſe things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the Words of this Law*: And the Pſalmiſt; *Pſ.* cxxxi. 1; *Lord, mine heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty*; *neither do I exerciſe myſelf in great matters, or in things too high for me*: And the Wiſe Son of *Sirach*; Eccluſ. iii. 21; *Seek not out the things that are too hard for thee, neither ſearch the things that are above thy ſtrength*: *But what is commanded thee, think thereupon with reverence*; *for it is not needful for thee to ſee with thine eyes the things that are in ſecret*: *Be not curious in unneceſſary matters, for more things are ſhewed unto thee, than men underſtand*: *For many are deceived by their own vain opinion, and an evil ſuſpicion has overthrown their judgment*. The only caution here neceſſary to be given, is that this entire humble Submiſſion of our own judgment, is due to *God only*, in the Words of his own immediate and expreſs Revelation: The paying the like deference to any *human doctrine* or *human explication* of doctrine whatſoever, without thoroughly examining it and underſtanding it perfectly; is not *Humility*, but *Ignorance and Sloth*. And This may ſuffice upon the *1ſt* particular, *what* True Humility is, and wherein it conſiſts.

SERMON

SERMON XLV.

Of HUMILITY.

LUK. xiv. 11.

For whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.

SERM. XLV.

IN a former Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I have endeavoured to ſhow diſtinctly *What* the Virtue of true Humility *is*, and wherein it conſiſts. It remains that I proceed at this Time, to propoſe ſome *Arguments* to perſwade men to the *Practice* of it. And 1*ſt*, The Scripture frequently lays before us, the *natural* ill conſequences of Pride; and the Advantages ariſing from true Humility, even in the *natural* Courſe and Order of Things.

Pride makes men fooliſh, and void of caution; and This puts them upon doing things that bring them to Diſhonour: *When Pride cometh, then cometh Shame; but with the lowly is Wiſdom*; Prov. xi. 2.

It makes men negligent, and improvident of the Future; and this often throws them into ſudden calamities; *The Turning away of the Simple*, (in the original it is, *the* Eaſe, *the* Negligence *of the Simple*;) *ſhall ſlay them; and the Proſperity of Fools ſhall deſtroy them*; Prov. i. 32.

It makes men raſh and peeviſh, obſtinate and inſolent; and This ſeldom fails to bring down ruin upon them; *Pride goeth before deſtruction, and an haughty Spirit before*

SERM. XLV.

before a Fall; *Better it is to be of an humble Spirit with the lowly, than to divide the Spoil with the Proud*; Prov. xvi. 18.

It involves men perpetually in Strifes and Contentions; and Theſe always multiply Sin, and are inconſiſtent with true Happineſs; *He loveth tranſgreſſion, that loveth ſtrife; and he that exalteth his Gate, ſeeketh Deſtruction*; Prov. xvii. 19.

It diſobliges men's beſt Friends, and gives their Enemies perpetual Advantages againſt them; and This often draws great inconveniencies upon them: *Before deſtruction the Heart of Man is haughty, and before Honour is Humility*; Prov. xviii. 12.

It makes men vain and lovers of Flattery, rejecting thoſe about them who would do them moſt Kindneſs, and liking thoſe beſt who do them the greateſt injury; And this cauſes them to be inſenſible of their own Diſeaſe, till they ſuddenly fall under Contempt: *A man's Pride ſhall bring him low, but Honour ſhall uphold the humble in Spirit*; Prov. xxix. 23.

It makes men impatient of good Advice and Inſtruction, and That renders them incorrigible in their Vices; *Seeſt thou a man wiſe in his own Conceit? there is more Hope of a Fool, than of him: The ſluggard is wiſer in his own conceit, than ſeven men that can render a reaſon*; Prov. xxvi. 12, 16; and xxviii. 26; *He that truſteth in his own Heart, is a Fool; but whoſo walketh wiſely, he ſhall be delivered.*

Laſtly; It fills men full of vain-glorious Deſigns, employing all their Thoughts in ſelf-confident Imaginations; and This makes them incapable of Religious improvements, and to have no reliſh of true Wiſdom: *The full Soul loatheth the honey-comb*; Prov. xxvii. 7; and xxv. 27; *It is not good to eat much honey; ſo for men to ſearch their own glory, is not glory.*

Theſe are the elegant Obſervations of wiſe *Solomon*, upon the *natural* inconveniencies and diſadvantages of Pride. In the *other* parts of Scripture we find likewiſe, ſeveral Remarks of the ſame kind. That *Pride* hinders men from examining impartially, into the Truth of Religion; *How can* ye *believe*, ſays our Saviour, *which receive honour one of another, and ſeek not the honour which cometh from God only?* Joh. v. 44. And *have any of the Rulers, or of the Phariſees believed on him?* ch. vii. 48. That it makes men *diſdain* to leave their pleaſing Vanities, and *think much* to condeſcend to the mean Reſtraints and Confinements of Religion; *Judges* ix. 9; *The Olive-tree ſaid,----Should I leave my Fatneſs?---And the Fig-tree ſaid,---Should I forſake my Sweetneſs, and my good Fruit?-----And the Vine ſaid,----Should I leave my Wine which cheareth God and Men, and go to be promoted over the trees?* ver. 13. That it cauſes men to take Offence at the Plainneſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel, and thereby hinders it from making due impreſſions upon them; *The Wiſdom of God, ---------which none of the Princes of This World knew*; 1 Cor. ii. 8; *Where is the Wiſe? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Diſputer of this World?------For ye ſee your calling, Brethren, how that not many Wiſe men after the Fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called*; ch. i. 20, 26; *Therefore let no man glory in men: If any man among you ſeemeth to be wiſe in This World, let him become a Fool, that he may be wiſe*; i. e. let him lay aſide the Wiſdom of *Self-conceit*, in order to become *capable* of Inſtruction in the *true Wiſdom*; ch. iii. 21, 18. That it hinders men from performing the Duty of Chriſtian Charity, one towards another; *Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not*; 3 Joh. 9. Laſtly, that in the execution of the *Offices* of Chriſtian Authority, it turns men from a due regard of the *Intent* of their Office to *temporal* and worldly conſiderations, and this leads them into a Snare, and brings them to Deſtruction: *A Biſhop* (ſays the Apoſtle) *muſt not be a novice, leſt being lifted up with Pride, he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil*; 1 Tim. iii. 6. Theſe are the *natural* ill conſequences of Pride, which the Scripture lays before us; and which conſequently diſcover to us the Advantages ariſing from true Humility, even in the *natural* courſe and order of things.

2*dly*. The *next* Argument the Scripture makes uſe of, to perſwade men to the Practice of Humility, is This; that Pride, as it is uſually *of natural* ill conſequence; ſo it is moreover *particularly hateful to* God; who repreſents himſelf as taking *delight*, to bring down the lofty, and to exalt the humble. It is the Obſervation of *Eliphaz* in the book of *Job*; ch. xxii. 29; *When men are caſt down, then thou ſhalt ſay, There is lifting up; and he ſhall ſave the Humble perſon*: And ch. xxxiii. 14, 17;

God

SERM. XLV.

God ſpeaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not; —— *that he may withdraw man from his purpoſe, and hide Pride from man.* God himſelf by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, declares, ch. ii. 11; *The lofty looks of Man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that Day; for the day of the Lord of Hoſts ſhall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he ſhall be brought low.* The Wiſe man in like manner; *Prov.* iii. 34; *Surely* (ſays he) *he ſcorneth the ſcorners, but giveth grace unto the lowly.* Which paſſage is, almoſt in the very ſame words, quoted by St. *Peter*; 1 *Pet.* v. 5; *Be clothed with humility; For God reſiſteth the Proud, and giveth Grace unto the humble.* The Bleſſed Virgin, after the Angel's anunciating to her the Conception of our Lord, inſerts into her hymn the ſame general Obſervation: *He hath ſhowed ſtrength with his Arm, he hath ſcattered the proud in the imagination of their Hearts; He hath put down the mighty from their Seats, and has exalted the humble and meek;* St. *Luke* i. 51. Our Saviour himſelf, taking a little Child, and ſetting it before his Diſciples, when they were contending for preeminence; *Verily* (ſays he) *I ſay unto you;* —— *whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as this little Child, the ſame is greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven;* —— *But whoſoever ſhall offend one of theſe little ones, that believe in me, i. e.* whoſoever ſhall by proud and contemptuous treatment diſcourage the meaneſt Chriſtian, or drive him into any Sin; *it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea;* St. Mat. xviii. 4, 6. And again, in the words of the Text, upon another not unlike occaſion; *Whoſoever* (ſaith he) *exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.* The *Reaſon why* Pride is always repreſented in Scripture, as being thus *particularly* hateful *to God*; is becauſe it uſually ſignifies, and always includes, ſomething of that *Preſumptuouſneſs*, that *preſuming* to tranſgreſs inſolently and with a high Hand, which is the greateſt Aggravation of Sin, and the moſt directly oppoſite to that meek and humble Spirit, which *trembleth at God's Word*, which ſtudies his Will, and is always fearful of diſobeying it. *Wo unto them*, ſaith the Prophet, *that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light and light for darkneſs;* If. v. 20; *i. e.* who are ſo inſolent as preſumptuouſly to deny, either in their Words or Actions, the moſt evident moral Differences of Right and Wrong: For ſo it is explained in the Words immediately following; *Wo unto them* (not, who miſtake, or are guilty of any Error or falſe opinion in this matter, but) *unto them that are wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight*; who ſay, *We* will *walk after our own devices, and we* will *every one do the imagination of his evil Heart:* Who *ſay unto God, Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways: What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit ſhould we have if we pray unto him?* Job xxi. 14. Concerning ſuch perſons as *Theſe* it is, that the Scripture threatens; *Every one that is proud in Heart, is an abomination to the Lord; though hand join in hand, he ſhall not be unpuniſhed*; Prov. xvi. 5. It is generally ſuppoſed by Divines, that the original Sin even of the *Devil himſelf*, was *Pride*; becauſe St. *Paul* ſpeaking of a man's being *lift up with Pride*, calls it *his falling into the condemnation of the Devil.* And this is not at all improbable; provided by *Pride* be underſtood, not (with the vulgar) his attempting to *reſiſt God Almighty by Force*, which is abſurd and impoſſible and childiſh to imagine; but his preſuming, upon the Greatneſs and Dignity of his Nature, inſolently to tranſgreſs ſome of the Divine Commands. And ſomething *like* this, is the Caſe of Powerful *Tyrannical Princes*, who proudly deſpiſe the Thoughts and Expectation of God's righteous judgment. For which reaſon, the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſo deſcribes the Deſtruction of the King of *Babylon*, that the Words are, not without probability, thought to be an Alluſion to the Fall of *Satan*; ch. xiv. 12; *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didſt weaken the Nations! For thou haſt ſaid in thine Heart, I will aſcend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the Stars of God, I will ſit alſo upon the mount of the Congregation, in the ſides of the North; I will aſcend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the moſt High. Yet thou ſhalt be brought down to Hell, to the ſides of the Pit.* And *They that ſee thee ſhall* — —*ſay, Is this the man that made the Earth to tremble?* —— *that made the World as a Wilderneſs, and deſtroyed the Cities thereof?* This is the manner wherein the Scripture

If. v. 21.

Jer. xviii. 12.

SERM. XLV.

ture repreſents God *delighting* to deſtroy Tyrants, thoſe *proud* and mighty Tranſgreſſors.

Another inſtance of which, is the deſcription of the Haughtineſs and the Fall of *Nebuchadnezzar*; Dan. iv. 30; *The King ſpake and ſaid, Is not This great Babylon that I have built for the Houſe of the Kingdom, by the might of my Power, and for the honour of my Majeſty?* But *when his Heart was lifted up, and his Mind hardned in Pride, he was depoſed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: And he was driven from the Sons of men, and his Heart was made like the Beaſts, and his dwelling was with the wild Aſſes*; ch. v. 20; that is, his Underſtanding was taken from him, and he *imagined* himſelf to be turned into a Beaſt.

And the Inſtance of *Pharaoh*; Exod. v. 2; *Who is the Lord, that I ſhould obey his Voice?——I know not the Lord, neither will I let Iſrael go*: Therefore the Lord *ſent all* his *plagues upon* his *Heart, and upon* his *Servants, and upon* his *People*; ch. ix. 14.

And that of *Herod*; Acts xii. 21; *Upon a ſet day, Herod arrayed in royal apparel, ſat upon his throne, and made an oration; And the people gave a ſhout, ſaying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man; And immediately the Angel of the Lord ſmote him, becauſe he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the Ghoſt. The Angel of the Lord*, that is, a ſudden diſeaſe, by the direction of Providence, came upon him: The Figure is the ſame as that which St. *Paul* uſes, when he calls a temporal Affliction the *Meſſenger* or *Angel* of Satan to buffet him; 2 *Cor.* xii. 7; So 1 *Th.* ii. 18.

Another Example, is that of *Haman*, in the Book of *Eſther*; who when he would have ſacrificed a whole Nation to his Pride and Haughtineſs, God juſtly ſuffered him to fall by the ſame ignominious Death which he had contrived for another.

And that of *ſpiritual Babylon* or *Chriſtian* Tyranny and the Spirit of *Perſecution* in the *Revelation*; ch. xviii. 7; *How much ſhe has glorified herſelf, and lived deliciouſly, ſo much torment and ſorrow give her; For ſhe ſaith in her heart, I ſit a Queen, and am no widow, and ſhall ſee no ſorrow; Therefore ſhall her Plagues come in one day; death and mourning and famine; and ſhe ſhall be utterly burnt with Fire; for ſtrong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*

The Manner and Reaſon of God's proceedings in all which and the like Inſtances, cannot be more elegantly expreſſed, than in the words of the wiſe Son of *Sirach*; *Eccluſ.* x. 7; *Pride is hateful before God and Man, and by both doth one commit Iniquity:——Why is Earth and Aſhes proud?——The beginning of Pride is, when one departeth from God, and his Heart is turned away from his Maker: For Pride is the beginning of Sin; and he that hath it, ſhall pour out abomination; and therefore the Lord brought upon them ſtrange calamities, and overthrew them utterly: The Lord hath caſt down the Thrones of proud Princes, and ſet up the meek in their ſtead: The Lord hath plucked up the roots of the proud Nations, and planted the lowly in their place: The Lord overthrew the Countries of the Heathen, and deſtroyed them to the Foundations of the Earth.——Pride was not made for men, nor furious Anger for them that are born of a woman.* This therefore is the *ſecond* Argument to deter men from Pride; the conſideration of its being *particularly hateful to God.*

3*dly*, The *third* and laſt motive the Scripture lays before us, to recommend the Practice of Humility, is the *Example* of *God* himſelf, and of our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*. Properly and ſtrictly ſpeaking, *Humility* is not a Perfection that can be aſcribed to *God*: Becauſe where there is no room for *Pride*, there can never be properly any Exerciſe of *Humility*; and He whoſe Nature is of infinite and unlimited Excellency, can neither poſſibly aſſume to *himſelf*, nor have aſcribed to him by *Others*, any thing beyond what is abſolutely and neceſſarily due to him. Neither can he poſſibly *debaſe* himſelf, in the literal Senſe; or in any wiſe *diminiſh* from his own ſuperlative and unchangeable Excellency. Nevertheleſs, in a figurative manner of ſpeaking, the Scripture *does* ſometimes aſcribe Humility to God, and recommends his Condeſcenſion as a Pattern for us to imitate. *The Lord, who dwelleth on high,*------humbleth *himſelf to behold the things that are in Heaven, and in the Earth*; Pſ. cxiii. 6: And *Pſ.* cxxxviii. 6; *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he reſpect unto the lowly.* And the ſame manner of ſpeaking is uſed by God himſelf; *Iſ.* lvii. 15; *Thus ſaith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity;*-----*I dwell in the High and Holy Place; with Him alſo, that is of a contrite and humble Spirit*; And

ch.

SERM. XLV.

ch. lxvi. 1; *Thus ſaith the Lord, The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Foot-ſtool*;--------yet *to This man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.* But the Example more accomodate to our Infirmities, and more generally alledged in Scripture, is that of *our Saviour:* Who, though he was Lord of all, yet was content *not to have where to lay his Head*; St. *Matt.* viii. 20. Before whom it was proclaimed; *Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and ſitting upon an Aſs*; St. *Matt.* xxi. 5. Who, tho' he was greater than All, yet declared concerning himſelf; *If I honour myſelf, my honour is nothing; It is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye ſay that he is your God*; St. *Joh.* viii. 54. Who, *though he was rich, yet for our ſakes he became poor, that we through his Poverty might be rich*; 2 Cor. viii. 9. Who, *glorified not* Himſelf, *to be made an High Prieſt; but he that ſaid unto him, Thou art my Son*; Heb. v. 5. Who, *when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly*; 1 Pet. ii. 23. Which Example of univerſal Humility in all Circumſtances, he himſelf propoſes to us for our Imitation: *Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart*; St. *Matt.* xi. 29. *If I, your Lord and Maſter, have waſhed your Feet, then I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you*; St. *Joh.* xiii. 15. *Whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant; Even as the Son of Man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for many*; St. *Matt.* xx. 28. And the ſame is urged by the Apoſtle; *Rom.* xv. 2; *Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification, For even* Chriſt *pleaſed not himſelf.* And *Phil.* ii. 5; *Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus; Who, though he was in the Form of God,* yet *was not greedy to appear as God*; (ſo the words ſignify in the original;) *but made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of Men; And--------humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs: Wherefore God alſo has highly exalted him.*

Theſe are the Principal Arguments the Scripture makes uſe of, to perſwade men to the practice of Humility *in general.* There are moreover *in particular,* as many peculiar diſtinct Motives to practiſe this Duty, as there are different Circumſtances and Varieties of Caſes wherein it is to be exerciſed. Without practiſing it towards *Superiors,* there can be no Government; without exerciſing it towards *Equals,* there can be no Friendſhip and mutual Charity. Then, with regard to *Inferiours*; beſides the *general* Example of Chriſt's ſingular and unſpeakable Condeſcenſion towards us All, there are proper Arguments to deter us from Pride upon account of *every particular Advantage* we may ſeem to have over Others, whether in reſpect of our Civil *Stations* in the World, or of our Natural *Abilities,* or of our Religious *Improvements.* If the Advantages of our Civil Stations in the World, tempt us to proud and haughty Behaviour; we may do well to conſider that Argument of *Job*; ch. xxxi. 13; *If I did deſpiſe the cauſe of my Man-ſervant, or of my Maid-ſervant when they contended with me; What then ſhall I do, when God riſeth up? and when he viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer him? Did not he that made* Me *in the Womb, make* Him? *and did not One, faſhion us in the Womb?* And ch. xxxiv. 19; *He accepteth not the Perſons of Princes, nor regardeth the Rich more than the Poor: for they are All the Work of his Hands.* Which ſame Argument is urged alſo by the Wiſe-man; *Prov.* xiv. 31; *He that oppreſſeth the Poor, reproacheth his Maker:* And ch. xxii. 2; *The Rich and Poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them All.* It will become us alſo, to think upon the *Vanity* and *Uncertainty* of theſe things, which are ſo apt to puff us up: *For all Fleſh is as Graſs; and all the glory of Man, as the Flower of Graſs; The Graſs withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away*; 1 Pet. i. 24. And Jam. i. 10; *Let the rich rejoice, in that he is made low; becauſe as a Flower of the Graſs he ſhall paſs away.* It may be proper likewiſe to conſider, that, if we are placed in High Stations, we have a *larger Account* to give, to him that ruleth over All; and poſſibly, while we are honoured upon this ſingle Account, others beneath us may be valuable for *better and more really excellent* Qualifications; And it will not be long before Death and Judgment level all worldly Diſtinctions; And the greateſt men, if they have been wicked, ſhall then be forced to cry out, *What hath Pride profited us? or what hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All theſe things are paſt away as a ſhadow, and as a Poſt that haſteth by. Again:*

If

SERM. XLV.

If we are apt to be puft up with the Advantage of Natural *Abilities*, ſuch as Learning, Knowledge, Wiſdom, or the like; it may humble us to conſider, how *ſmall* a Degree of theſe things, we can attain to even at the beſt; ſeeing that *Knowledge*, as *Job* moſt elegantly expreſſes it, *is hid from all men, neither is it found in the land of the living.* And if we could attain to *much more* of it, than we do; yet ſtill there is ſomething far more Excellent than That: *For Knowledge puffeth up, but* Charity *edifyeth*: *And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet, as he ought to know*; 1 Cor. viii. 1. Wherefore, *Thus ſaith the Lord: Let not the Wiſe man glory in his Wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his Might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in This, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, judgment and righteouſneſs in the Earth; For in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord*; Jer. ix. 23. *Laſtly*, If our Advantages even in Religious *improvement* itſelf, tempt us to ſpiritual Pride and Vain-glory, to judge or to deſpiſe our weaker Brethren; the Scripture admoniſhes us to conſider, that all the members of Chriſt, are uſeful in their ſeveral Stations; *I ſay to every man*, ſays the Apoſtle, *that is among you, not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think; but to think ſoberly, according as God has dealt to every man the meaſure of Faith, i. e.* according to the Station wherein God has placed him in the Church; *For, as* (in our natural capacity) *we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the ſame Office; ſo* (in our *ſpiritual* capacity) *we being many are one body in Chriſt, and every one members one of another*; Rom. xii. 3; that therefore *the Eye cannot ſay to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you*; 1 Cor. xii. 21; that our Saviour himſelf refuſed not to be baptized by *John Baptiſt*, though a perſon infinitely meaner than himſelf; but on the contrary declared, that *thus it becomes us to fulfil all Righteouſneſs*: that, how great ſoever our Abilities or Advantages be, yet the means by which we arrive even at Theſe, are, *not that we are ſufficient of ourſelves, to think any thing as of ourſelves, but our Sufficiency is of God*; that therefore we muſt *learn not to think of men, above that which is written, that no one of us be puffed up for one againſt another; For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what haſt thou, that thou didſt not receive?* The meaning of which places, is not, that God acts upon Men as Machines, ſo as that They do nothing at all themſelves, but that the Gifts whereby they are *enabled* to become eminent, (and that not ſo much in *moral* Virtues, as in *miraculous ſpiritual Powers* in the Church, mentioned at large by St. *Paul*; 1 *Cor.* xii; Theſe) are all, not their own, but received from God's free Goodneſs and Bounty. Further, we are admoniſhed to conſider, in abatement of ſpiritual Pride and Contempt of our weaker Brethren, and of thoſe who differ from us in matters of opinion; and with whom we are apt to be angry for not complying with *our* Notions; that there is a day a coming, which diſtinguiſhing men by their Works of Piety, and true Holineſs only, ſhall level them in all other reſpects, and ſet them upon Even ground before an impartial Bar; where mens fooliſh pride and arrogance, ſhall be entirely confounded; and thoſe who looked with ſcorn upon others as infinitely below them, ſhall find themſelves placed upon an equal foot with them whom perhaps they moſt deſpiſed: *Who art thou*, therefore, *that judgeſt another man's ſervant? To his own Maſter, he ſtandeth or falleth*; Rom. xiv. 4; and ver. 10; *Why doſt thou judge thy Brother? and why doſt thou ſet at nought thy Brother? For we ſhall all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt.* That, how great ſoever our improvements be, even in real Virtue and Righteouſneſs; yet we have continual reaſon to *take heed leſt we fall*; and Pride and Confidence, is the Security only *of a* blind *man*, who ſees no danger: That even while we ſtand the moſt upright, we have nothing to glory of before God; For *how can man be juſtified with God? Behold, he put no truſt in his Servants, and his Angels he charged with Folly; How much leſs in them that dwell in houſes of clay, whoſe Foundation is in the Duſt!* That the greateſt and moſt eminently pious men, have been exemplarily humble in This reſpect; holy *Job* refuſing to juſtify himſelf before God; and *Abraham* ſtiling himſelf Duſt and Aſhes; and *Jacob* acknowledging himſelf leſs than the leaſt of God's mercies; and St *Paul* calling himſelf leſs than the leaſt of all Saints: not that he *then* was ſo, but that he *had been* a Perſecutor of the Church of God. That Humility is the only means to entitle us to the Divine Aſſiſtance and continual Direction,

ch. xxviii. 21, 13.

2 Cor. iii. 5. 1 Cor. iv. 6.

Job xxv. 4. iv. 18.

ix. 20. xlii. 6.

rection, and the beſt help to a right Underſtanding in matters of Religion; (meaning always by Humility, not a blind and careleſs Submiſſion to the Notions of *Men*, but an entire giving up our ſelves to the Will of *God*;) *Truſt in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not unto thine own underſtanding; In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy Paths; Be not wiſe in thine own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil*; This is the Advice of *Solomon*; *Prov.* iii. 5. And the Pſalmiſt declares: *Pſ.* xxv. 9; *Them that are meek will God guide in judgment; and ſuch as are gentle, them will he learn his way*; And St. *Paul* directs; 2 *Cor.* x 5. to *caſt down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the Knowledge of God, and to bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Chriſt*; Not our *Underſtandings* to the Opinions of *Men*; but our *Wills*, the Thoughts and Deſigns of our Hearts to the Obedience of Chriſt. And the wiſe Son of *Sirach* adviſes; *Eccluſ.* iii. 17; *My Son, go on with thy buſineſs in Meekneſs, ſo ſhalt thou be beloved of him that is approved; The greater thou art, the more humble thy ſelf, and thou ſhalt find Favour before the Lord; Many are in high places, and of renown, but myſteries are revealed unto the Meek*; And our Saviour himſelf profeſſes; St. *Matt.* xi. 25; *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes; Even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.* Theſe are the Arguments the Scripture makes uſe of, to perſwade us to the Practice of Humility; And they are all briefly ſummed up in the Words of the Text; *Whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.*

SERM. XLV.

SERMON XLVI.

Of Poverty of Spirit.

MATT. v. 3.

Bleſſed are the Poor in Spirit; for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

SERM. XLVI.

THE *Beatitudes*, or Declarations of Bleſſedneſs, with which our Saviour begins his Sermon upon the Mount; though they ſeem each of them to be a recommendation of ſome *ſingular Virtue*, and to contain each of them ſingly a Promiſe that ſuch a *particular* Virtue ſhall have its *diſtinct*, *proper*, and *peculiar Reward*; yet This is not ſo to be underſtood, as if any of theſe Virtues ſingly ſpecified, were to be taken *ſeparately*, excluſive of *Other Virtues*; or as if any of the *Rewards* here diſtinctly mentioned, were to be looked upon as conferred *ſeparately*, and *divided* from the *Other* Conſtituents of the Happineſs of Heaven: But by a very uſual and well-known manner of ſpeaking, wherein a Part is figuratively put for the Whole; as, in *Other* places of Scripture, *Faith* or *Hope* or *Charity*, or *Repentance*, or the *Love* or *Fear* of God, do frequently ſtand for the *Whole Duty* of a Chriſtian; and the ſingle particulars of *ſeeing God*, or *being with God*, or of *living for ever*, are intended to include in general *All* the Bleſſings and Happineſs, *All* the Glories and Enjoyments, of the *Heavenly State*; ſo *Here* likewiſe our Saviour, in each *Beatitude*, muſt be underſtood *in general* to annex the promiſe of the Happineſs of Heaven, to the *univerſal* Practice of our *whole* Chriſtian

SERM. XLVI.

tian Duty. And it is with ſingular Beauty and Elegancy, as well as with great Variety and Inſtructiveneſs of expreſſion, that, in the *former* part of each Beatitude, he deſcribes our *Chriſtian Duty* under the character of ſome *particular eminent Virtue*; and, in the *latter*, he ſets forth to us, under the like number of different *diſtinct Views*, the Glories of his heavenly Kingdom: Repreſenting, in the *latter* part of each Beatitude, the *Happineſs* of That eternal State, under *ſuch a particular Figure*, and in *ſuch a particular Light*, as is moſt agreeably correſpondent to That *particular* Notion of Virtue, under which he had in the *former* part repreſented our Chriſtian *Duty*. Thus, when the Life of a Chriſtian is expreſſed under the character of being *poor in Spirit*, then his Reward is the *Riches* of the *Kingdom of Heaven: Bleſſed are the poor in Spirit, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* When his *preſent* State is repreſented as a temporary *Mourning*, then his *future* State is the *Comforts* and the Joys of Eternity: *Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted.* When his Virtue is deſcribed under the Notion of *Meekneſs*, in oppoſition to ſtriving violently for Dominion and great Poſſeſſions; then his Recompence is the *Inheritance* of the whole *Earth*; even the inheritance of That *New Heaven and New Earth, wherein* Meekneſs is to *dwell* and reign for ever: *Bleſſed are the Meek, for they ſhall inherit the Earth.* When his ſteddy Love of Truth and Right, is ſet forth under the ſimilitude of *hungring and thirſting after Righteouſneſs*; then the Promiſe to him is, that he ſhall be fully *ſatisfied*, even to the utmoſt of his Deſire: *Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.* When his Religion is conſidered as conſiſting, (as to the main Branches of it) in Acts of *Goodneſs*, *Charity*, and *Mercy* towards *Others*; then the Happineſs annexed is, that He *himſelf* ſhall find *Mercy* and Compaſſion from *God: Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy.* And, to mention but One Inſtance more; When the whole Moral Obedience of a ſincere Diſciple of Chriſt, is emphatically comprehended under the ſingle Title of *Purity of Heart*; then the Joys of Heaven are held forth to him correſpondently under *This* View, that he ſhall be admitted to See, and to dwell for ever in the Preſence of, the *Fountain of Purity and Holineſs* itſelf: *Bleſſed are the pure in Heart, for they ſhall ſee God.*

Of Theſe *Beatitudes*, the *Firſt* is what will be the Subject of our preſent Meditations: *Bleſſed are the Poor in Spirit, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* In diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall *firſt* endeavour to explain diſtinctly the Meaning of the Phraſe, being *poor in Spirit*; And then, *Secondly*, I ſhall draw ſome *Obſervations*, from the conſideration of the Nature of the *Virtue* here ſpoken of, and of the *Reward* here declared to be annexed to it.

I. In order to explain diſtinctly the Meaning of this phraſe, being *Poor in Spirit*; it is to be obſerved, that thoſe two different manners of expreſſion, which we *Now* uſually call *literal* and *figurative*, were in the *Jewiſh* language frequently denoted by the words *fleſh* and *Spirit*. *The fleſh*, ſays our Saviour, *profiteth nothing; the words that I ſpeak unto you, they are* Spirit *and they are life*; Joh. vi. 63. His meaning is; He intended not to be underſtood *literally*, but *figuratively*. To *Be* therefore, or *Do*, any thing *in* Spirit; ſignifies *being* or *doing* that Thing *figuratively*, in the *ſpiritual* or *moral*, in the *religious* or in the *abſtract* ſenſe; in oppoſition to the *groſs* and more *literal* meaning, in which the ſame words may at *other* times be underſtood. Thus when the Angel in the Revelation *carried away* St. John *in the* Spirit *into the wilderneſs*; (ch. xvii. 3.) the Meaning is, he was not carried thither *really* and *literally*, but only in a *viſionary* Repreſentation. By the like figure of Speech, St. *Paul*, when he was *perſonally abſent*, yet, becauſe his *Name*, his *Commiſſion* and *Authority*, was to be made uſe of, as if he had *Himſelf* been There; *I* therefore, ſays he, *verily, as abſent in Body, but preſent in* Spirit; 1 Cor. v. 3; and again; (Col. ii. 5.) *Though I be abſent in the Fleſh, yet am I with you in the* Spirit, *joying and beholding your Order.* And in a ſtill *more ſublime* Uſe of the ſame Metaphor; *Acts* xx. 22. while he was yet at full liberty, and had no violence offered him, yet, prophetically foreſeeing that *Bonds and Afflictions* were coming upon him, *Behold*, ſays he, *I go* Bound in the Spirit *unto Jeruſalem.* Upon the ſame Ground of expreſſion, *That Moral* Holineſs and Purity of the *Goſpel*, which is oppoſed to the *ritual* and *ceremonious* Performance of the *Jewiſh Law*, our Saviour calls *Worſhipping the Father in* Spirit *and in Truth*; John iv. 23. And

That

SERM. XLVI.

That abſolute *departing from all unrighteouſneſs*, ſo eſſentially required in the Goſpel, of which the *Jewiſh Circumciſion* was but a Type or Emblem; is by the Apoſtle moſt elegantly ſtiled, *Circumciſion in the Spirit*: Rom. ii. 28; *That is not Circumciſion, which is outward in the Fleſh: But — Circumciſion is That of the Heart, in the* Spirit, *and not in the letter, whoſe Praiſe is not of Men, but of God: For* We *are the Circumciſion*, (Phil. iii. 3.) *which worſhip God in the* Spirit, — *and have no confidence in the fleſh.* We *Chriſtians*, ſays he, if, according to our Profeſſion, we purify our ſelves from all Filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, We are the *True circumciſion*; while the unbelieving *Jews*, if they continue impenitent, are, notwithſtanding the Covenant of *literal* circumciſion, rejected as being, in the ſight of God, *uncircumciſed in Heart*; Acts vii. 51.

Anſwerable therefore to this figurative manner of expreſſion in ſo many *other* places; the Phraſe in the *Text*, *Poor in* Spirit, in contradiſtinction to *literal Poverty of* Eſtate, ſignifies a *Temper of* Mind, diſingaged from, and ſitting looſe to, the *Covetous* and *Ambitious* Deſires of the preſent World: That *moderate* and good Temper or Diſpoſition of mind, which cauſes thoſe who *have* Riches, not to ſet their *Hearts* upon them, not to *abuſe* them, not to *truſt* in them, but to employ them virtuouſly to the glory of God, and to be at all times willing rather to part with them, than betray the Intereſt of Truth and Virtue: And which, for the ſame reaſon, cauſes thoſe who have *no* riches, to be *contented*, and not *murmuring*, nor *unthankful* towards God, but willing rather to continue *always* in a mean and low eſtate, than to gain Riches by unrighteous and unlawful Methods. This is being *poor in Spirit*. This is what the Prophet *Iſaiah* deſcribes; ch. lxvi. 2; *To This man will I look, ſaith the Lord; even to Him that is Poor*; to him that is *of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.* This is the Temper of thoſe whom St. *James* calls the *Poor of this World, Rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom*: The Temper, of which St. *Paul* declares, that *Godlineſs with Contentment is great Gain*; and which our Saviour deſcribes in his character of the Church of *Smyrna*; Rev. ii. 9; *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; but thou art Rich*: Rich in *Virtue*, Rich in *Good Works*, Rich *towards God*. According to *This* account of the virtue of being *poor in Spirit*; an Eminent *Inſtance* thereof was the Practice of *Moſes*, when he *refuſed to be called the Son of Pharoah's daughter, chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon.* And the *contrary* Spirit, is That which our Saviour ſpeaks of, *Luke* xii. 21; *So is he that layeth up treaſure for himſelf, and is not rich towards God.*

And now, having at large explained (which was the *Firſt* thing propoſed,) the *Meaning* of this Phraſe, being *Poor in Spirit*; It remains in the

II. *Second* place, that I proceed to draw ſome *Obſervations*, from the conſideration of the Nature of the *Virtue* here ſpoken of, and of the *Reward* here declared to be annexed to it: *Bleſſed are the Poor in Spirit, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* And

1*ſt*. From what has been ſaid, it appears, that perſons of *All* ranks, and conditions whatſoever, are *equally* concerned, in the *Admonition* included in the declaration here made by our Lord. *Poor* and *Rich*, the *Meaneſt* and the *Greateſt*, are equally *Capable* of being, and equally *obliged* to be, *Poor in Spirit*. A perſon of the *largeſt* and moſt *plentiful* Poſſeſſions; if he has obtained them by *lawful*, and *honourable* Methods; if they make him not *inſolent*, and *oppreſſive* to his Neighbours; if he uſes them with *Sobriety*, *Moderation* and *Temperance*; if he be willing to *relieve* the Neceſſities of thoſe that want, and be rich in *good Works* as well as in *Poſſeſſions*; if, being *Rich in this world*, he *be not high-minded, nor truſts in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*; if he *does good*, and is *ready* to *communicate, laying up in ſtore for himſelf a good Foundation againſt the time to come, that he may lay hold on eternal Life*; In a word, if he prefers the *Commandments of God*, before the Increaſe of his *Worldly Intereſt*; and is willing upon any occaſion, to run the hazard of *loſing* what he poſſeſſes, rather than depart from the Ways of *Truth* and *Virtue*: This man, though he poſſeſſed the *Wealth* of the *Indies*, and exceeded even *Solomon* in all his Grandeur; yet ſtill he would be included in the deſcription given by our Saviour in the Text, and would be intituled to the *Bleſſedneſs* of being *Poor in Spirit*. On the *other* ſide, One who

is

is literally *poor*; if he be *unthankful*, and *complaining* againſt *God*; if his Poverty be brought upon himſelf, by *Debauchery* or *Idleneſs*; if he be *vicious* as far as his Circumſtances enable him, and would ſtick at *no unrighteous Practices* to advance his Fortune: Such an one, though he be in the *Loweſt* Poverty of *Eſtate*, yet can in no wiſe come under the denomination of being *Poor in Spirit*. It is evident therefore, that theſe words of our Lord in the Text, do not relate to men's *external Circumſtances* or *Condition* in the *World*, but to the *Temper* or *Diſpoſition* of their *Minds*; and conſequently that the *Advice* included in This *Beatitude* or *Declaration of Bleſſedneſs*, *equally* concerns perſons of *All* Ranks and Eſtates whatſoever. The *Poor*, by Contentedneſs, Patience, Reſignation to the Will of God, and by the Exerciſe of ſuch Other virtues as are more peculiarly proper to a mean and low eſtate; and the *Rich*, by preferring at all times the Commands of God, before either the Increaſe or the Preſervation of their Wealth; are (as I ſaid) equally *Capable* of being, and equally *obliged* to be, *Poor in Spirit*. Nevertheleſs, though the *Virtue* here recommended, is undoubtedly the *Common Duty* of *Both*; yet, ſince the *Poor* are in This particular under *Fewer* Temptations, and can withdraw their Affections from ſuch an Adherence to the World as is the chief Impediment of a Chriſtian life, with much leſs difficulty than the *Rich* can do; and ſince, upon *This* account, our Lord and his Apoſtles do very *frequently* pronounce *abſolutely* and *in general*, *Wo* to the *Rich*, and *Bleſſedneſs* to the *Poor*, in ſuch *large* and *unlimited* expreſſions, as may eaſily be miſtaken unleſs interpreted according to the Analogy of the *more diſtinct* manner of ſpeaking uſed in *Other* places: Therefore,

2*dly*, I obſerve, that there is contained in the Text a *particular* Ground of *Comfort and Support*, to thoſe who are *Poor* and *Deſtitute*, and under *Mean Circumſtances* in the World: and *particular* matter of *Caution*, to thoſe who abound in *Riches* and *Power* and the *Good things* of this *preſent Life*. The *Duty* here recommended by our Lord, of being *Poor in Spirit*, is (as I have already obſerved) *equally* obligatory to perſons of *All* ranks and conditions whatſoever; and the *Promiſe* annexed, is to *All*, in whatever ſtation they be in the World, who ſhall attain That Good Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind. But now this excellent Temper, this Virtue of being diſingaged from the *Covetous* and *Ambitious* Deſires of the World, is what the *Poor* are *naturally* led to by their very Circumſtances; being under the Advantage of eſcaping Many Temptations, which Others are continually ſubject to; and being perpetually called upon by the *Afflictions* of *This* life, to turn their Thoughts to the expectation of a *Better*. It ought therefore to be matter of Juſt *Comfort* and *Support*, nay even of *Thankfulneſs* too, under many kinds of temporal Wants and Afflictions; to conſider how great an Advantage ſuch circumſtances give men, of obtaining this virtue of being *poor in Spirit*: Which our Saviour looked upon as ſo *natural* and *eaſy*, and ſo *likely* to be practiſed by Perſons in That State, that, in places parallel to the Text, he ſometimes uſes that general and ſeemingly unlimited expreſſion; *Bleſſed be ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God*; and, *Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted.* For the ſame reaſon, on the *other* ſide, to thoſe who abound in *Riches* and *Power* and the *Good Things* of this preſent Life, the Text plainly ſuggeſts *particular* matter of *Caution*; in annexing the heavenly Reward to *That* Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, which *They in particular* are ſurrounded with ſo many Temptations to depart from, that our Saviour ſometimes pronounces in words *ſeemingly abſolute*, *Wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your conſolation.* It is evident, his Meaning *cannot* be, to repreſent *Riches* as a *Crime*; For he elſewhere expreſly explains himſelf to his Diſciples, that he meant not to blame thoſe who *have*, but thoſe who (to the neglect of God and Virtue) *truſt in* Riches: But his Deſign clearly was, to admoniſh and put us in mind, how *dangerous* a ſtate, Great Proſperity generally is; how *full of Temptation*, how ready to *puff* men *up*; how apt to make them *covetous*, *inſolent* and *ambitious*; and to deſtroy in them that *meek*, that *equitable*, that *moderate* diſpoſition of mind, which in the Text is ſtiled being *poor in Spirit*. St. *Paul* gives us a remarkable inſtance of an ill effect in this kind, even of a *little* Proſperity; when the *Corinthians* falling into Diviſions among themſelves, began to be *puffed up for one againſt another: Now*, ſays he, *ye are full, now ye are Rich, ye have reigned as Kings without us.* And our Saviour, in

Luke vi. 20. Matt. v. 4.

Luke vi. 24.

1 Cor. iv. 8.

SERM. XLVI.

his Admonition to the Church of *Laodicea*, hints at a *like* caſe; *Rev.* iii. 17; *Thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of Nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched and miſerable and poor and blind and naked.*

3*dly*, A *Third obſervation* which may be made upon the words of the Text, is; that from the *Reaſon* our Saviour here gives, *why* he pronounces the Poor in Spirit to be Bleſſed; (*Bleſſed are the Poor in Spirit*, for *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*:) From *this Reaſon*, I ſay, here annexed by our Saviour, it evidently appears, that *however excellent* Virtue *really* is in itſelf, and *truly deſirable* even for its *own* ſake; yet neither are the higheſt Improvements in Religion, any way inconſiſtent with having reſpect to the recompence of Reward; nor is the Practice of Virtue (as ſome have abſurdly argued with a moſt *Vain* Affectation) at all *mercenary*, when founded upon a View to the Happineſs of Heaven. *Mercenarineſs* ſuppoſes always that Something *Wrong* is done, for the ſake of ſuch *Lucre* as a virtuous man can never purchaſe upon *Such Terms*. But the Happineſs of *Heaven*, conſiſts *itſelf* in, and is eſſentially conjoined with, the perfection of *Virtue*; And the expectation and view of *This* Reward, is *itſelf* an *immediate Act*, of the *Virtue* of *depending upon God*. Were *Temporal Proſperity*, the *certain* and *conſtant* and at all times the *immediate Reward* of *Virtue*; it might indeed be alledged, *not* that the Practice of it was *mercenary*; becauſe *That* always ſuppoſes the doing of ſomething which is in itſelf *blame-worthy*; but it might indeed be alledged, in *diminution of the Excellency* of it, as we find it was in the caſe of *Job* in the time of his Proſperity, *Does Job ſerve God for nought?* But as the Practice of Virtue is in reality *far from* being *ſecure* of any *temporal Recompence*, and the *Reward* it principally relies upon is *ſpiritual* and *heavenly*; the expectation of *Such* Reward, far from being any diminution, is *itſelf* (as I now obſerved) a proper *Act* of *Virtue*, and of *Dependance upon God*. In the Antient *Heathen* World, the Virtue of the Beſt and Braveſt men, under the Light of Nature and Reaſon, conſiſted in their *Truſting* in God; in their *Truſting*, *without* any expreſs revealed Promiſe, that the *Judge of the whole Earth* would finally *do what was Right*, and would *not* ſuffer *Virtue* to *periſh* equally with *Vice*. Under the *Old Teſtament*, *Moſes*, being eminently what our Saviour in the Text calls *Poor in Spirit*, preferred the *Poverty* and *Affliction* of the People of God, before the *Riches* and *Honours* of *Pharoah*'s Court; and it is recorded of him, not in a way of *diminiſhing*, but of *extolling* his Virtue, that he *eſteemed this Reproach* to be *greater Riches than the Treaſures in Egypt; for he had reſpect unto the recompence of the Reward*. And when *Job*, in the time of his greateſt Diſtreſs, perſiſted in his Reliance upon God; (*though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him*;) it was not a *lower*, but a *higher* pitch of the *ſame virtue* in him, (becauſe it was fixing it upon a *rational* and *conſiſtent* Ground,) to declare that he *knew that his Redeemer lived, and that he ſhould ſtand at the latter day upon the Earth*. Under the *New Teſtament*, *God himſelf* has, in a more *expreſs* and *explicit* manner, declared himſelf to be, in the future and eternal ſtate, *a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*; not thereby to *diminiſh*, but to *increaſe* That Virtue, the Practice of which is *rationally* and *conſiſtently* ſupported by ſo divine and glorious an Expectation. Accordingly, the Apoſtle St. *Paul* declares concerning *himſelf*, that he *preſſed toward the Mark, for the* prize *of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*. And he perpetually exhorts all *other* Chriſtians; ſo to *run*, that they may *obtain an* incorruptible Crown; ſo to behave themſelves, as they who are continually *looking for That Bleſſed Hope and the glorious Appearance of the Great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: laying hold upon the* Hope *ſet before them*; even *the Hope which is laid up for them in Heaven; looking not at the things which are temporal, but at the things which are eternal*; and conſidering that their *light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. Our *Saviour* alſo himſelf, when his Diſciples asked him, ſaying, *Behold, we have forſaken all and followed thee, what ſhall* we *have therefore?* ſcrupled not to reply, *Matt.* xix. 28; *Verily I ſay unto you, — when the Son of man ſhall ſit in the throne of his glory*, Ye *alſo ſhall ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael*. And elſewhere, in his exhortations to the ſame Diſciples; *When men ſhall revile you*, ſays he, and *perſecute you; rejoice, and be exceeding glad; For great is your Reward in Heaven*. Nay, which is *more remarkable* than all theſe; concerning our Lord's *own* practiſe,

Phil. iii. 14.
1 Cor. ix 25.
Tit. ii. 13.
Heb. vi. 18.
Col. i. 5.
2 Cor. iv. 18.
Matt. v. 12.

tice, the Scripture declares, that *for the Joy which was ſet before him, he endured the Croſs, deſpiſed the Shame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Throne of God.* To imagine therefore, as Some *Enthuſiaſtick* Writers, and Others through a *vain and conceited affectation* have done; that the perfection of Virtue wholly excludes Self-love, and all Regards to any recompence of Reward; is taking upon themſelves to reproach the *Greateſt* and moſt eminently *Virtuous* men, that have lived in All *Nations* and in All *Ages*; it is reproaching the *Apoſtles* of our Lord; it is reproaching *our Saviour* in his *own* Practice; it is reproaching *God himſelf*, and the *Nature of things* which he has made; who hath *prepared for*, and *expreſly promiſed to*, them that love and obey him, ſuch *good things* as paſs man's Underſtanding, *which Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of man, to conceive.* Through the expectation of which ſpiritual and eternal Happineſs, whoever is prevailed upon to live *virtuouſly*, has a Right to apply to himſelf upon account of Religion *in general*, what our Saviour in the Text ſays *in particular* of thoſe who are *poor in Spirit Bleſſed are they, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

SERM. XLVI.

SERMON

SERMON XLVII.

Of the Virtue of CHARITY.

1 COR. xiii. 3.

And though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.

SERM. XLVII.

IN the following Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I ſhall 1*ſt* explain *What* That Virtue is, which the Apoſtle here calls *Charity*; and *What* its oppoſite *Vice*. 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider the excellent *Effect*, which the general Practice of this Virtue would have in the World; and the great *Streſs* which our Saviour and his Apoſtles accordingly do conſtantly lay upon it, as being the *Principal Part* and the *main End* of Religion. 3*dly*, I ſhall take Notice of the incredible *Miſchiefs* ariſing to Mankind, from the *Want* of this Great Virtue. And *Laſtly*, I ſhall draw ſome uſeful *Inferences* from the whole.

SERM. XLVII.

I. I am to explain *What* That Virtue is, which the Apoſtle here calls *Charity*; and *What* its oppoſite *Vice*. And here it is evident at firſt ſight to every attentive perſon, that the word in This place cannot poſſibly mean, what in common Speech it is now generally uſed to ſignify, *Alms* or *Charity to the Poor*. For it is expreſly *diſtinguiſhed* from That, in the very words of the Text itſelf: *Though I beſtow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me Nothing*. *Charity* therefore muſt needs here ſignify ſome Virtue or good Habit, of a *more general* and extenſive Nature. And indeed the Apoſtle himſelf diſtinctly defines it, in the verſes following my Text; *Charity*, ſays he, *ſuffereth long, and is kind; envieth not, vaunteth not it ſelf, is not puffed up; doth not behave it ſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no Evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth; beareth all things, endureth all things*; and ſo on; ver. 4, 5, 6, 7. From this deſcription it is evident, that by the word *Charity* in the Text, is expreſſed That *Chriſtian Temper and Diſpoſition*, That *Love and Good-Will towards Mankind*, which is the Great Foundation of All virtues; and concerning which the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere tells us, that the End *of the Commandment is Charity*, *Without* this *Good and Chriſtian Temper of Mind*, no ſingle *Action* is valuable in the ſight of God: *Though I beſtow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*: That is, *Almsgiving*, or the Act of any *other* Virtue, if it proceeds only from ſome accidental Cauſe, and ſprings not from a right Principle; if it be accompanied with, and made ſubſervient to, Deſigns of Pride and Ambition of Imperiouſneſs and Dominion, of Party, Faction and worldly Powers in matters of Religion; it is of no Eſteem in the Sight of God. Where *Love and Goodneſs and Chriſtian Temper*, are not the *Governing Principle*; nothing is acceptable, no not even Almſgiving itſelf. But where *Love* and *univerſal Charity*, (even *That Love* which St. *Paul* declares to be *the fulfilling of the Whole Law*; Where *This*) is the *Root*; *There* indeed, one of its Faireſt *Branches*, one of the goodlieſt *Inſtances* and *Effects* of it in *particular*, is *Liberality towards our poor Brethren*. From whence it has come to paſs, that *Charity*, which properly ſignifies *univerſal Love and Good-Will*, has by frequent uſe been confined, to the *particular* ſenſe of *Charity to the Poor*. And Great indeed are the Promiſes which are made in Scripture, to this ſingle *Branch* of Charity, *in particular*: It is ſtiled by our Saviour; St. *Luke* xvi. 9; a *Making to ourſelves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlaſting Habitations*. Upon which *Application* of the Parable of the Unjuſt Steward, I cannot but obſerve by the way, that his remitting to his Lord's Debtors a part of their Debt, ought not to be underſtood (as it uſually is) to have been a defrauding of his *Lord*; For it is only upon his *former* behaviour, that the Text charges him with *Injuſtice*: But in this *laſt* Action, he ſeems to be repreſented as obliging his Lord's Debtors out of what *He himſelf* was ſtill to account for: For which reaſon, our Saviour compares *his* ſecuring to himſelf by a timely Bounty the Friendſhip of thoſe Debtors, (he compares it) to *Our* laying up for ourſelves, by works of Charity and Beneficence here on *Earth*, a treaſure hereafter in the *Heavens*. Very *Great* things therefore, I ſay, are indeed ſpoken in Scripture, concerning this *particular* Virtue of *Liberality to the Poor*. But it is evident This is *not* what is meant by the word *Charity* in the Text, becauſe it is expreſly diſtinguiſhed in the words themſelves, from *beſtowing all our Goods to feed the Poor*. And indeed it deſerves to be particularly taken notice of, that not only in *This* Text, but in all *Other* places alſo, without exception, through the whole *New Teſtament*; the word *Charity* never once ſignifies the *giving of Alms*, but always That *Univerſal Love*, That *Chriſtian Temper* and *Goodwill towards All men*, of which *Alms-giving to the Poor* is but one ſingle Branch, or one particular Effect. And *Many other* Inſtances there are, wherein the Signification of words in common Uſe being much changed by cuſtom and courſe of Time, conſiderable Errors and Miſtakes are thence apt to ariſe among ſuch as read the Scriptures

SERM. XLVII.

careleſly and without Attention: Which Errors can no otherwiſe be prevented, but by taking care to obſerve, not the bare *Sound of ſingle Words*, but the connexion and ſenſe and meaning of the *whole Diſcourſe*. To Him who thus reads and conſiders with Attention, it is manifeſt that the *Charity*, which the Apoſtle here ſuppoſes a Perſon may be wholly void of, though he *beſtows all his Goods to feed the Poor*; and which he at large deſcribes, in the following part of this Chapter; it is manifeſt, I ſay, that the Charity here ſpoken of, is That *Chriſtian Temper*, That *univerſal Love* and *Benignity of Mind*, which, in oppoſition to all worldly Party and Faction, to all Hatred, Contentiouſneſs and Animoſity, Imperiouſneſs and Deſire of impoſing upon each other, teaches men with meekneſs and patience, with gentleneſs and kindneſs, in imitation of Chriſt, to be ſollicitous for nothing elſe, to be earneſtly bent upon no other Deſign, comparatively ſpeaking; but that of promoting univerſally the *Knowledge of Truth*, and the *Practice of Righteouſneſs*, for the general Benefit of Mankind.

The *Contrary* to which Virtue of univerſal Love and Charity, or the proper Vice of *Uncharitableneſs*, is That Spirit of Violence and Arbitrarineſs, That Love of Imperiouſneſs and Dominion, That preſumptuous Hating and Ill-treating of each other, upon account of unavoidable Differences in opinion; things not eſſential to religion; which our Saviour ſo earneſtly warns us againſt; St. *Matt.* vii. 1; *Judge not, that ye be not judged; For with what judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged:* —— *And why beholdeſt thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but conſidereſt not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* St. *James* in like manner; *ch.* iv. 12; *There is one law-giver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy; Who art thou that judgeſt another?* And St. *Paul*; Rom. xiv. 4. *Who art thou that judgeſt another man's ſervant? to his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth:* And *Why doſt thou judge thy Brother, or why doſt thou ſet at nought thy Brother? for we ſhall all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*; ver. 10: *Let not him that eateth, deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth*; ver. 3. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, (that is, is not Forms and Ceremonies,) *but righteouſneſs and peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; ver. 17. From the two laſt-cited Verſes it is evident, that this Duty of *Charity*, or of *not judging and cenſuring* each other, is not to be underſtood as having place with regard to Inſtances of plain *wickedneſs*; but with reſpect either to ſuch matters of *Speculation*, as are not in mens own Power; or to things indifferent in *Practice*, which are not of moral Obligation. For, all notorious *wickedneſſes*; ſuch as are Atheiſm, and Prophaneneſs; Oppreſſion, Injuſtice and Fraud, Rioting and Debauchery; are *Sins* which (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it) go before *unto Judgment*: They are ſuch things, for which we *may* and *ought* to judge ill of men, and to rebuke them ſharply and ſeverely for them. But the proper Objects about which the Virtue of *Charity* is to be employed, are Things *indifferent*, concerning which God has given no plain Commandment; or ſuch Matters of *Opinion*, wherein ſincere men may with equal regard to Truth and Virtue, follow their different judgments and conſcience. Judging and cenſuring each other about things of *This* nature, is what the Scripture declares to be altogether *Unchriſtian*. And the experience of all corrupt Ages has abundantly ſhown, that mens preſumptuous reproaching each other upon account of ſuch things as Theſe; has been the great Cauſe of all the Schiſms and Diviſions, of all the contentions and animoſities, which have over-run and in great meaſure deſtroyed the Chriſtian world. For the Sins of Schiſm and Diviſion among Chriſtians are of a much larger extent, and will be charged to the Account of *More* and of *other kind of* perſons, than careleſs and preſumptuous men are apt to imagine. All imperiouſneſs and affectation of dominion, which St. *Peter* calls *Lording it over the Heritage of God*; all peeviſhneſs and unreaſonableneſs; all contentiouſneſs, fierceneſs, and animoſity of Spirit; all ill Uſage of men, and caſting names of Reproach upon each other, on account of Matters either of *indifferent Practice* or of *ſincere Opinion*; all *Parties and Factions*

Factions in Religion, or *Incroachments* upon that Chriſtian (and virtuous, *not* licentious) *Liberty wherewith* our *Lord has made* his Diſciples *free*; *Gal.* v. 1. All theſe things are juſtly chargeable, with being each in their proportion, the Cauſes and ſad occaſions of irreconcileable Diviſions among Chriſtians. From whence it plainly appears, that not only *particular Perſons*, but even the greateſt *Bodies of Men*, may be guilty of That Vice, which the Apoſtle in the Text calls *not having Charity*, or not having That Chriſtian Temper and univerſal Love, without which all other even the *greateſt* appearances of Goodneſs will *profit men nothing*. The Church of *Rome*, for Example, is a ſtupendous Inſtance of This: who, excluding (as much as in them lies) from Chriſtian Communion and from the Hopes of Salvation, all men who cannot embrace the Doctrines of Popes and Councils and other human Inventions, as of like neceſſity with the Goſpel itſelf; do, by the Greateſt Schiſm that ever was in the World, cut in ſunder (or rather cut themſelves off from) That Spouſe or Body or univerſal Church of Chriſt, which can poſſibly be but One, One Temple built upon the *Foundation*, and upon the *Doctrine*, of Chriſt and his Apoſtles only; and, though conſiſting of different *parts*, varying from each other in external Forms, as Members of the ſame living Body differ in Shape from each other; yet all united in one Holy Band of *Righteouſneſs* and *Charity*.

II. Having thus at large explained *What* That Virtue is, which the Apoſtle in the Text calls *Charity*, and *what* its oppoſite *Vice*; I proceed in the 2*d* place to conſider the excellent *Effect*, which the general Practice of this Virtue would have in the World; and the great *Streſs* which our Saviour and his Apoſtles accordingly do conſtantly lay upon it, as being the *Principal Part* and the main *End* of Religion. That nothing is ſo much wanting, in order to ſet the world right, as a *charitable Spirit* and *Chriſtian Temper* among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, is evident to All men. That the Goſpel *may ſtill* be propagated; nay, that it may *beſt*, and moſt *effectually*; nay, that indeed it *can only* be propagated, by the Same means with which our Saviour *began* to propagate it; by *ſtrength* of *Reaſon* and *clearneſs* of *Evidence*, by good *Example* of *Virtue and Righteouſneſs* in *Practice*, joined with *Love* and true *Charity* towards the Perſons of All men; is demonſtrable from the Nature of *Things* and of *Men*. The *Harveſt* of perſons capable of receiving the Truth, when laid before them plainly and diſtinctly in the Spirit of Meekneſs and Charity, is very great: The *Labourers* only, ſaith our Saviour, are too *few*; *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harveſt, that he will ſend forth Labourers into his Harveſt*. Did Chriſtians univerſally labour, after This manner; the *Effect* could not but be, that the *Knowledge of the Lord would fill the Earth, as the Waters cover the Sea*: The Vine which God's right Hand has planted, would *ſpread out her Branches unto the Sea, and her Boughs unto the River*: Not by any *One Party* of Chriſtians ſwallowing up and deſtroying all the reſt; but by each of them ſeverally taking away their uncharitable Diſtinctions, removing their needleſs Particularities, and the unchriſtian Bars and Confinements ſet up by human invention; and uniting upon the One immoveable Foot, of the everlaſting Goſpel of Truth and Charity. Marvellous are the Promiſes of Bleſſings and Happineſs, which in the Prophetick part of Scripture are made to the Church of God, when it ſhall *in This manner* prevail upon the Earth. *With righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the Meek of the Earth; and he ſhall ſmite the Earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips, ſhall he ſlay the wicked: And righteouſneſs ſhall be the girdle of his loyns, and faithfulneſs the girdle of his reins: The wolf alſo ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the Leopard ſhall lie down with the Kid; and the Calf and the young Lion and the Fatling together, and a little Child ſhall lead them:* —— *They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my holy Mountain; for the Earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea:* —— *And he ſhall ſet up an Enſign for the Nations, and ſhall aſſemble the outcaſts of Iſrael, and gather together the diſperſed of Judah, from the four corners of*

SERM. XLVII.

of the Earth; Iſai. xi. 4, &c. And in the *Revelation of* St. *John*, the like Prophecies are again repeated; ch. xiv. 6; xi. 15; *I ſaw an Angel having the Everlaſting Goſpel to preach unto Them that dwell on the Earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people:*——And *there were great Voices in Heaven, ſaying; The Kingdoms of this World are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt; and he ſhall reign for ever and ever.* Whether theſe and the like Prophecies ſhall yet finally have a *literal* Accompliſhment, by an univerſal Prevalency of the Goſpel of Peace on Earth; or whether they ſhall have their full and literal completion, *only* in That *New Heaven and New Earth, wherein Righteouſneſs* is to *dwell* for ever; is ſtill a Secret in the Breaſt of Providence, which we ought not to be over-confident in explaining. But in *This* we cannot err; in exhorting in the mean time all Chriſtians continually, to put on that Spirit of Chriſt, That Spirit of Meekneſs and true Humility, That Spirit of Love and univerſal Charity, That Chriſtian *Temper* and diſpoſition of Mind; which *alone* can promote the Kingdom of God, and His righteouſneſs: Which, *ſo far* as 'tis at any time practiſed, cauſes Chriſtianity to become in Fact *a Light ſhining before men*, inviting them *to glorify our Father which is in Heaven*: And which, if it was the *Univerſal* Behaviour of Chriſtians, would certainly cauſe the Goſpel *univerſally to prevail*, by means of that irreſiſtible Excellency and Beauty in which it would appear, when All Contentions and Animoſities, all unreaſonable *Prejudices* againſt each other, all Parties and Factions and Names of Reproach among Chriſtians upon account of differences in opinion, were laid aſide; and every man, making the Goſpel alone the Rule of his *own* Actions, and having no Deſire to have *dominion* over the Conſciences of his Brethren, but all of them inſtructing and exhorting each other (according to the reſpective *Order* and Nature of their ſeveral *ſtations* and *capacities*,) with mutual Love and Forbearance, as Fellow-ſervants of one common Lord by whom they muſt All at laſt be judged; bent their Whole Endeavours towards *One only* uniform End, the promoting amongſt men the *Knowledge of Truth* and the *Practice of Right*. Were This (I ſay) the *General* Behaviour of Chriſtians, according to the Obligations of their moſt Holy Profeſſion; it could not fail but the Goſpel would be embraced univerſally over all the Earth. And for This reaſon it ſeems to be, that our Saviour in all his Diſcourſes conſtantly lays ſo peculiar a *Streſs* upon this Duty of *Love and Charity and Good-will towards Men*; as if it was the *Principal Part* and *Great Deſign* of Religion; and as if he had always a particular View to that general Corruption and Deſtruction of true Chriſtianity, which he foreſaw would for ſo many Ages together be the conſequence of *Want of Chriſtian Temper* among thoſe who called themſelves the *Chriſtian World*. *A new Commandment*, ſays he, *I give unto you, that ye love one another*; Joh. xiii. 34. A *New* Commandment; Not that it was not *Always* mens Duty in general; but that it was to be, in a *New and diſtinguiſhing manner*, the Character and Badge of Chriſtians; the Effect and the Support, the Life and Eſſence of true Chriſtianity. The *Jews* hated the *Samaritans*, and the *Samaritans* hated the *Jews*; and by This means their Schiſm was kept up for ever. But *Chriſtians* were to love their Brethren; to love alſo thoſe that differed from them; nay, to ſhow all gentleneſs even towards thoſe that moſt fiercely oppoſed them; that, by this godlike behaviour, they might by degrees gain and win all men over to the acknowledgment of the Truth. It was to be their diſtinguiſhing Character; *Joh.* xiii. 35; *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have Love one to another.* As imperiouſneſs, and affectation of dominion, and perſecution, is eſſentially the Spirit of *Antichriſt*; ſo the *Chriſtian* Spirit and Temper, is Meekneſs, Charity, Forbearance and Love. The *True* Diſciples of Chriſt, are to be diſtinguiſhed from falſe prophets, from wolves in ſheeps clothing; not by mens crying, *Lord, Lord*; not by their fierceneſs for what *They* call the Temple of God, and which perhaps is nothing but ſome Human Invention: But *by their Fruits*, ſays our Lord, *ye ſhall know them.* By their *Fruits*; that is, by thoſe

SERM. XLVII.

thoſe *Chriſtian virtues*, by thoſe Good *works*, which the Scripture elſewhere ſtiles the *Fruits of the Spirit*. Our Saviour *himſelf*, deſired to be judged of by the *Goodneſs* as well as by the *Greatneſs* of his Works: And therefore, in his parable of a *Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf*, the *Reaſon* he gives for aſſerting the unpardonableneſs of mens aſcribing his mighty Works to the aſſiſtance of the *Evil One*, is the *Goodneſs* and *Beneficence* of the Works. In another place, *comparing together* the Great and moſt important Duties of Religion; next to the Love of *God*, he makes Charity towards *Men*, the Grand Deſign of Religion: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart*; *This*, ſaith he, *is the firſt and great Commandment*; *And the ſecond is like unto it*, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*. The *Apoſtle* St. *John*, after his Maſter's example, lays the ſame ſtreſs upon this excellent Virtue; declaring that without this Love towards *Men*, there can be no ſuch thing as a ſincere Love towards *God*; 1 *Joh.* iv. 20; *If a man ſay*, *I love God*, *and hateth his Brother*, *he is a Liar*; *For* —— *This commandment have we from Him*, *that he who loveth God*, *love his Brother alſo*. His meaning is; All pretences of Love towards *God*, which produce not true Virtue, and particularly Love and Charity towards our Brethren; are nothing more than *mere Enthuſiaſm*. Again: he tells us, That without this univerſal Charity, no pretended zeal for Religion can be ſincere; ch. ii. 10; *He that loveth his Brother abideth in the Light*; —— *but he that hateth his Brother*, *is in darkneſs*, *and walketh in darkneſs*; that is, he is altogether *ignorant* of the true Nature and Spirit of Chriſtianity. Laſtly; That the want of this Virtue, and the prevalency of the contrary imperious Spirit, is one principal Mark and Character of Antichriſt; ch. iii. 10; *In this the children of God are manifeſt*, *and the children of the Devil*; *whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs*, *is not of God*, *neither he that loveth not his Brother*; *For this is the Meſſage that ye heard from the beginning*, *that we ſhould love one another*. St. *Peter* in like manner; 1 *Pet.* iv. 8; *Above all things*, ſaith he, *have fervent Charity among yourſelves*; *for Charity ſhall cover the Multitude of Sins*: The Senſe is, not that any one *particular* Virtue, ſuch as that which we now call *Charity to the Poor*, ſhall excuſe men *from* the practice of *other* duties, or *in* the practice of *any* Vices or Immoralities; but that That *general* Chriſtian Temper and good Spirit of Love and ſincere Deſire of doing good to all men, which he here calls *having fervent Charity among yourſelves*, ſhall cover Many Errors, many *ſuch* imperfections and failings, as a truly good Chriſtian, who has this excellent root of Virtue in him, can be ſuppoſed to be guilty of. The very ſame Notion is likewiſe perpetually inculcated by St. *Paul*; Col. iii. 14; *Above all theſe things put on Charity*, *which is the Bond of Perfectneſs*: The word which we here render *Charity*, is in *This*, as in *all other* places, Ἀγάπη *Love*, *Univerſal Love* towards Mankind. Again; 1 *Tim.* i. 4, 5; *Neither give heed*, ſays he, *to Fables and endleſs Genealogies*, (that is, to matters of mere *Form*, Order of *Succeſſions*, and the like, which the *Jews* were apt to lay ſo great Streſs upon;) But *The End of the Commandment*, (the Great Deſign of the *Chriſtian* Law,) *is Charity*. Laſtly, and to conclude: In That Noble Diſcourſe, whereof my Text is a part, he thus eloquently and affectionately, inculcates the ſame Doctrine. *Though I ſpeak*, ſays he, *with the Tongues of Men and of Angels*, *and have not Charity*, *I am become as ſounding Braſs*, *or a tinkling Cymbal*. *And though I have the gift of Prophecy*, *and underſtand all Myſteries*, *and all Knowledge*; *and though I have all Faith*, *ſo that I could remove Mountains*; *and have no Charity*; *I am nothing*. *And though I beſtow all my Goods to feed the Poor*, *and though I give my Body to be burned*, *and have not Charity*; *it profiteth me nothing*. In St. *Paul*'s opinion therefore; though a man could *preach* like an *Angel*, and had the *Knowledge* of an *inſpired Prophet*; Though he had the *Faith* of an *Apoſtle*, and the *Zeal* of a *Martyr*, and gave away in *Alms to the Poor*, even his *whole Subſtance*: yet, if his Religion conſiſted in *Party and Faction*, and promoted *uncharitableneſs*, *imperiouſneſs*, and *ill-treatment* of *Other Men*; even notwithſtanding all thoſe Great Excellencies, it would profit him nothing. The *Reaſon* of this lofty aſſertion, follows in the 8th

SERM. XLVII.

verſe: For, all *other* excellent Gifts, and even *Virtues themſelves*, are only of temporary continuance; But *Charity* Alone, *never faileth*: *Whether there be Prophecies, they ſhall fail; whether there be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be Knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away*: *Faith* ſhall be ſwallowed up in *Viſion*, and *Hope* ſhall terminate upon *Enjoyment*; But the *Love* of *God and of our Brethren*, ſhall, when *This world* is *paſſed away*, continue and increaſe *for ever*. That every *Man*, and every *Number of Men*, who call themſelves *Chriſtians*, may ſeriouſly conſider this important Truth; God of his infinite Mercy grant, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON XLVIII.

Of the Virtue of CHARITY.

1 COR. xiii. 3.

And though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words of the Apoſtle, I propoſed 1*ſt*, To explain *What* That Virtue is, which he here calls *Charity*; and *What* its oppoſite *Vice* is: 2*dly*, To conſider the excellent *Effect*, which the general Practice of this Virtue would have in the World; and the great *Streſs* which our Saviour and his Apoſtles accordingly do conſtantly lay upon it, as being the *Principal Part* and the *Main End* of Religion: 3*dly*, To take Notice of the incredible *Miſchiefs* ariſing to Mankind, from the *Want* of the Practice of this Great Virtue: And *laſtly*, To draw ſome uſeful *Inferences* from the Whole. SERM. XLVIII.

The

SERM. XLVIII.

The *Two Former* of theſe Heads, I have already gone through: And have ſhown; *That* the word *Charity* here, does not ſignify the *particular Virtue* of giving *Alms* to the Poor; For 'tis expreſly diſtinguiſhed from *That*, in the very words of the Text itſelf; But, that it is here made uſe of to expreſs a more *general* and extenſive Virtue, even That *Chriſtian Temper and Diſpoſition*, That general *Love and Good-Will towards Mankind*, which is the Great Foundation of *All* Virtues and good Habits; teaching men with Meekneſs and Patience, with Tenderneſs and Affection, with Gentleneſs and Kindneſs, after the Example of Chriſt, to labour and be ſolicitous for Nothing elſe, comparatively ſpeaking, than the promoting univerſally the *Knowledge of Truth* and the *Practice of Righteouſneſs* in the World.

That the contrary *Vice* therefore, or the proper Sin of *Uncharitableneſs*, is That Spirit of Violence and Impoſition, which reigns too much amongſt Mankind; That Love of Imperiouſneſs and Dominion, That preſumptuous Hating and Ill-treatment of each other, which prevails ſo much in the World, upon account of Matters either of *indifferent Practice* or of *ſincere Opinion*.

That the *Effect*, which the *General Practice* of the *Charity* or *Chriſtian Temper*, here recommended by the Apoſtle, would produce in the World, could not fail to be *The univerſal Spreading of the Goſpel of Truth and Peace*, over all the Nations of the Earth.

And, *That* for *This reaſon* it is, that our Saviour and his Apoſtles accordingly do conſtantly lay ſo *Great and Singular a Streſs* upon *This* Virtue, as being the *Principal Part*, and the *main End* of Religion.

III. I Proceed now, in the *Third* place, to conſider diſtinctly the incredible *Miſchiefs* ariſing to Mankind, from the *Want* of the practice of this excellent Virtue. And here opens itſelf to our View, one of the moſt melancholy Scenes, that ever was beheld upon the face of the Earth. Our Bleſſed Saviour came to teach Mankind a Doctrine of Truth and Purity, of Simplicity and Plainneſs; A Doctrine of Religion, which All men might eaſily underſtand, and which 'tis infinitely every man's Intereſt to practiſe; A Doctrine, the Whole of which, as he himſelf aſſures us, is ſummed up in Two particulars, the Love of God, and of our Neighbour; the Worſhip of the One True God, the Father and Lord of all things, thro' the One True Mediator whom he himſelf has appointed, in oppoſition to every kind of Idolatry; and a conſtant ſincere endeavour of doing Good to all men, in oppoſition to every degree of Unrighteouſneſs, Iniquity and Uncharitableneſs. To the Happineſs of Mankind even in *This* Life, 'tis manifeſt Theſe are the Means which would contribute imcomparably more, than any other Methods whatſoever. But the *principal* View wherewith our Lord gave theſe Commands to his Followers, was that they might practiſe them in expectation of God's having appointed a day, wherein he would judge the World in righteouſneſs by his Son Jeſus Chriſt; and reward every man finally, in the *future and eternal* State, according to their Works. And becauſe 'twas thus principally with regard to the *Life to come*, that our Lord gave all his Commandments; therefore with great earneſtneſs he continually cautioned his Diſciples, that as *he* had declared his *own Kingdom* was not to be of This World, ſo *They* ſhould continually take ſtrict heed *after him*, never to make their *preaching of* His *religion* a pretence for aſpiring after *temporal Authority*. In a Parable framed on purpoſe, he commands his Followers not take upon them to pull up the *Tares, leſt they root up alſo the Wheat with them*. The meaning of which is not, that Magiſtrates are not to cut off *Malefactors*; but that in matters merely *religious*, Chriſtians are not to preſume to judge the Conſciences of each other, before the day of the Lord cometh. *The Princes of the Gentiles*, ſays he, *exerciſe Dominion over them, and they that are Great, exerciſe Authority upon them: But it ſhall not be ſo among You; but whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your Miniſter; and whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant; Even as the Son of Man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his Life*

a

a Ranſom for Many; Matt. xx. 25. So *long*, and ſo *far*, as Chriſtianity was planted according to This Standard of its Great Author; in plainneſs and Simplicity of uncorrupt Doctrine; and in meekneſs, and Humility, Love and Charity, in Practice: When Chriſtians *continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of Bread and in Prayers*; ——— *continuing daily with one accord in the Temple*, ——— *eating their Meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of Heart, praiſing God, and having favour with all the people*; When *the Multitude of them that believed, were of one Heart, and of One Soul*; *and great Grace was upon them All*; Acts iv. 32, 33. *Then* did their *Light* ſhine forth *indeed* before men, and cauſe them to praiſe and *glorify the God of Heaven*: *Then* were they in reality and indeed, *acceptable to God, and approved of Men*: *Then* was the Goſpel truly and conſpicuouſly, like a City upon an Hill, *a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of God's people Iſrael*: It was the *Praiſe* and *Wonder* of thoſe who beheld its Bleſſed *Effects*, and *might have been* the *Joy of the whole Earth*. Had Chriſtians continued, as St. *Paul beſeeched* them, Eph. iv. 1; *to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they were called*; *with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love*; *endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*: Had they conſidered the Argument he urges, that there could be but *One Body and One Spirit, even as they were called in One Hope of their Calling*; *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptiſm*; *One God and Father of all, who is Above All*: Had they continued, (according to the exhortation and inference he draws from this Argument;) to *ſpeak the Truth in Love*, that they *might grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Chriſt*; *From whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every Joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the Body unto the edifying of itſelf in Love*: The Church of God, eſtabliſhed upon This *Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone*; might in its Whole *Building fitly framed together*, have *grown* up into One *Holy Temple in the Lord*.

SERM. XLVIII.

Acts ii. 42. 46.

ver. 6.

ver. 15.

But an *Enemy* ſoon *ſowed Tares among this Wheat*, and contentious men very early began to build *Hay and Stubble* upon the *Foundation of Chriſt*. Not content with the Simplicity and Plainneſs of the Goſpel, which could poſſibly furniſh no Materials for Strife and Contention, vain men ſoon began to mix their own uncertain Opinions with the Doctrine of Chriſt; and had no other way to give them Weight and Authority, but by endeavouring to force them upon the Faith of Others. And out of This *Bramble*, as *Jotham* foretold the men of *Shechem*, *Judg.* ix. 15; out of this *Bramble* hath a *Fire* proceeded, which hath *devoured the Cedars of Lebanon*: Or, as the Prophet *Ezekiel* expreſſes himſelf concerning the Vine of *Iſrael*; ch. xix. 14, A *Fire is gone out of a Rod of her Branches, which hath devoured her Fruit*. For, from a Deſire of being *Many Maſters*; from a Deſire of forcing mutually our *own* Opinions upon Others, inſtead of exhorting them to ſtudy and obey the Goſpel of *Chriſt*; have ariſen Strifes and Contentions, Hatred and Uncharitableneſs, Schiſms and Diviſions without End. *From whence*, ſays St. *James*, *come Wars and Fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your Luſts that war in your Members?* From a zeal for the Religion and for the Commandments of *Chriſt*, from a Concern for the promoting of Truth, Righteouſneſs and Charity, 'tis evident in the nature of things, and in the experience of All Ages, that Wars and Fightings, Hatred and Animoſities, never have, nor can proceed. *Theſe* precious Fruits have always ſprung from That Root of Bitterneſs, a zeal for the Doctrines and Commandments of *Men*, a Striving for *temporal Power and Dominion*. At the *firſt Beginning* of the *working of the Myſtery of Iniquity*, the *Builders of Hay and Stubble upon the foundation of Chriſt* went no farther than to *Cenſoriouſneſs and Uncharitableneſs* towards their Brethren. Againſt whom, St. *Paul* argues, *Rom.* xiv. 10; *Why doſt thou judge thy Brother, or why doſt thou ſet at nought thy Brother? for we ſhall all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*. But in proceſs of time; as Water, at a further Diſtance from the Fountain, di-

Ch. iv. 1.

SERM. XLVIII.

vides itſelf continually into *more* ſtreams, and becomes leſs pure, and more mixt, and more different from the Nature of the Fountain itſelf; ſo, when men had once departed from the Simplicity and Purity of the *Doctrine*, and from the Charitableneſs and Goodneſs of the *Spirit* of Chriſt, their Hatred and Animoſities againſt each other increaſed continually, till they literally fulfilled That remarkable Prophecy of our Saviour, in which is contained a moſt Severe Reproof of thoſe Corrupters of the Goſpel of Truth and Charity, who he foreſaw would ariſe in following Ages; St. *Luk.* xii. 49; *I am come to ſend Fire on the Earth*; And *Matt.* x. 34; *Think not that I am come to ſend Peace on Earth; I came not to ſend Peace, but a Sword: For I am come to ſet a man at variance againſt his Father, and the daughter againſt her Mother; — and a man's Foes ſhall be they of his own Houſhold.* Nay, even that deſcription which he gives of the Perſecution which the *Jews* ſhould bring upon his Diſciples, *Joh.* xvi. 2; *The Time cometh, that whoſoever* killeth *you, will think that he doth* God *Service*; even *This*, in Time, came to be fulfilled by *one* Chriſtian, (ſo they ſtill *called* themſelves;) it was fulfilled, I ſay, by *one* Chriſtian upon *another*. Till at laſt, when the Meaſure of iniquity was become full, and the Power of Popery was compleatly ſeated and eſtabliſhed in the Temple of God; then, in like manner as our Lord declared concerning That generation of the *Jews* in which He himſelf lived, that *the Blood of all the prophets, which was ſhed from the foundation of the World*, --- from the *Blood of righteous Abel* even unto That day, ſhould be *required of that Generation*; ſo likewiſe, and for the very ſame Reaſon, concerning That Body of men, which calls itſelf the *Chriſtian* and the *Catholick Church*, does the Scripture wonderfully foretel, that *in Her* ſhould be *found the Blood of Prophets and of Saints, and of all that are ſlain upon the Earth.* *Since* the Reformation, and *in Places where* it has happily prevailed, this wicked and unchriſtian Spirit has in very great meaſure abated: But ſtill, ('tis to be feared,) even among too many *Proteſtants themſelves*, Zeal for particular Forms and Ceremonies, more than for Virtue and Religion itſelf; A Concern for the diſtinguiſhing Doctrines of Parties, more than for the Commandments of our Common Lord; A Deſire of compelling each Other's Faith, more than of reforming our Own Manners; continues to hinder the growth of Chriſtian Charity, and, like the Worm at the Root of *Jonah*'s Gourd, to eat out the Vitals of true Religion. We read every day in St. *John*, that *whoſoever doth not Righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother*; and that *if any man ſay, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar*: And yet we are ſtill ſo weak, as frequently to reverſe the Text, and think we can no way ſo zealouſly ſhow forth our *Love* towards *God*, as by *Hatred* and *ill treatment* of our *Brethren*. Our Lord ſeverely rebuked his Diſciples, telling them *they knew not what Spirit they were of*, when they would have called for Fire from Heaven upon the *Samaritans*: And yet men are ſtill ſo fooliſh, as to be continually deſirous of uſing Methods of Force, even *Chriſtians* againſt *each other*. The *immediate and neceſſary Effects* of This Uncharitableneſs and Bitterneſs of Spirit, is, that the true Fruits of Virtue and Righteouſneſs and real Goodneſs are (comparatively ſpeaking) neglected and lightly eſteemed; that Superſtition and Bigottry and abſurd Notions of Religion prevail among the *Weak*; and thoſe who have *more diſcernment*, who have diſcernment enough to *ſee*, and yet not enough to *ſee Through* theſe Abſurdities, are tempted to Atheiſm, Scepticiſm, and Infidelity. All which things being obſerved by thoſe who are *without*; inſtead of being moved to *glorify our Father which is in Heaven*, as our *Light ſhining before them* ought to cauſe them to do; they are on the contrary, by our *Works of* Darkneſs which they beheld, confirmed in their Unbelief; and *the Name of God is blaſphemed among the Gentiles, through Us, as it is written.* This is the Great Reproach to Chriſtians and the Great Impediment to the Progreſs of Chriſtianity. This is that which makes the *Pagan* and *Mahometan* World ſtill ſuperiour in Number to the Chriſtian; and that even in the midſt of the Light of the Goſpel itſelf, yet Infidelity prevails beyond meaſure.

Rev. xviii. 24.

But

SERM. XLVIII.

But 'tis an eaſy thing to ſee the *ill conſequences* of Uncharitableneſs, and to complain of the *Miſchiefs* that ariſe from the Diviſions among Chriſtians. The Difficulty is, and the more uſeful part is, to find how to *remedy* them. Now 'tis very evident there are but *Two* poſſible Ways by which the Diviſions among Chriſtians can have an End put to them. The *one* is, what all parties of Men are generally very fond of, but which can never poſſibly be accompliſhed; and if it could, 'twould be the Deſtruction of Chriſtianity itſelf. The *other* is, what would very eaſily and effectually cure the Evil, but what All parties are always very unwilling to put in Practice. The Method of curing Diviſions, which Every party of men are very fond of, is, that thoſe of all *other opinions* would at a venture unite in ſubmitting to *Them*: The Effect of which, if it could be accompliſhed, would be not the Eſtabliſhment of the Goſpel of Chriſt, but of ſome Worldly Power and Dominion in the ſtead of it; as is more particularly notorious, in all Places where Popery has prevailed. But indeed *This* method of Union is altogether impoſſible to be accompliſhed. For as every party of Chriſtians reproaches all *others*, with cauſing Schiſms and Diviſions by not coming into *Their* opinions; ſo the *others* reciprocally caſt the ſame reproach upon *Them*, for not coming into *Theirs*: And thus the Fire of mutual Uncharitableneſs is blown up for ever, while Both ſides are perhaps equally, or perhaps unequally, in Fault. For the caſe is exactly the ſame, in *Moral* matters, as in things *natural*. In Nature and Truth, *real Motion* belongs only to That Body, which changes the *Abſolute Place* it was in; but *relative Motion*, or the parting of one body from another, belongs equally to the *Body from which another is removed*, as to *That which itſelf moves*. Thus likewiſe in *Morality*; the *Real* Sin, or *Guilt*, of *cauſing Schiſms and Diviſions*, lies always at the door of Him who departs from the *Truth*, and who lays the *Streſs* of Religion where Chriſt has not laid it: But the *relative Schiſms or Diviſions themſelves*, by which Chriſtians are parted from each other, are always, by All Parties equally, laid to the Charge of their Adverſaries; And it muſt not be expected, that they can ever be cured, by any *One Party* ſwallowing up *all the reſt*. The *Other* therefore, and the *Only True* Method, of remedying Diviſions; but which All parties are generally very unwilling to put in Practice is, that every party of Chriſtians, forbearing to inſiſt and to lay too much Weight on their own diſtinguiſhing Doctrines or Inventions of Men, ſincerely endeavour to unite upon the foundation of the Goſpel itſelf, that is, the original undiſputed Doctrines and Commandments of Chriſt; and in all *other* things, by mutual Charity and Forbearance, Tenderneſs and Goodwill, preſerve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; according to St. *Paul*'s direction; *Rom.* xiv. 3; *Let not him that eateth, deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth.*

IV. It remains, in the *Laſt* place, that I draw ſome uſeful Inferences from what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude. And

1*ſt*, From what has been ſaid concerning the Nature of the *Virtue of Charity*, and its *oppoſite Vice*; we may ſee clearly whence it comes to paſs, that St. *Paul* in his Catalogue of great Wickedneſſes; *Gal.* v. 20; among *uncleanneſſes, idolatry, murders, drunkenneſs and revelling*, reckons alſo *hatred, variance and ſtrife, ſeditions* (or Schiſms,) *hereſies and ſuch like*, as being *Works of the Fleſh*. 'Tis evident, *differing in judgment or opinion*, is not a work of the *Fleſh*, but of the *Underſtanding*. *Diſapproving* the *opinions* of thoſe whom a man ſincerely thinks to be in the *wrong*, is not a work of the *Fleſh*, but the *neceſſary* Duty of a *Chriſtian*. The Crimes therefore which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of, are the preſumptuous affecting of worldly Power, and the cauſing of Striſes and uncharitable Diviſions among Chriſtians, by laying the *Streſs* of Religion upon particular diſtinguiſhing Doctrines and Practices, on which our Saviour himſelf has laid *No Streſs*. Theſe are *indeed*, Works of the *Fleſh*: Theſe are deſtructive of That Love and *Charity* and Chriſtian Temper, which is ſo fundamental in Religion, that, whoſoever wants it, though *he beſtows all his goods to feed the poor, and though he gives his Body to be burned*, yet, the Text tells us, *it ſhall profit him nothing.*

SERM. XLVIII.

nothing. The expreſſion is of the ſame kind with That in *Gal.* v. 2; *Behold, I Paul ſay unto you, that if ye be circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing:* Circumciſion, was in its own Nature a thing of indifference; *Circumciſion,* as he elſewhere tells them, *is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing.* But if they forced it upon the *Gentile* Converts as a *Neceſſary part of Chriſtianity,* This was a deſtroying of Charity, and their Religion (he declares) would be in vain.

2*dly,* From what has been above ſaid concerning the true Nature and Spirit of Chriſtianity, we may eaſily anſwer That Queſtion uſually put by thoſe of the Church of *Rome*; *Where was the Reformed Religion before the Times of the Reformers?* The Anſwer is: 'Twas *Then,* juſt where it is *Now,* even in the *Goſpel of Chriſt*; ſtudied and obeyed by all Sincere Followers of *Truth and Charity.* Which *Rule,* whoſoever in *Any* Age, or in *Any* Country of the World, has walked by; That perſon was a true Diſciple of Chriſt: And whoſoever follows any *Other* Rule, is in *No* Age and in *No* Country a good Chriſtian. *Gal.* vi. 16; *As many as walk according to This Rule, Peace be on them, and Mercy, and upon the Iſrael of God.* For *whereſoever two or three are gathered together in the Name of Chriſt,* (whether they be two or three *thouſands,* or two or three *ſingle* perſons,) *There* (ſays our Lords) *am I in the midſt of them.*

3*dly,* From what has been above ſaid, we may eaſily underſtand in what Senſe it is, that *Zeal* and *Moderation* are *Both of them* in Scripture equally recommended as Virtues. When the Queſtion is concerning things *indifferent* in their own nature, concerning matters of *Party* and Diviſions among *Men,* concerning any *Doctrines or Practices* of *Human* Appointment; then the Rule is, *Let your Moderation be known unto all men*; Phil. iv. 15: And *Epheſ.* iv. 2; *With all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love.* But when the matter in queſtion is a *Moral Virtue,* or a *plain and expreſs Command of God*; Then, *it is good to be* zealouſly *affected always in a good thing*; Gal. iv. 18. For Chriſtians, are to be a people zealous *of* good *Works*; Tit. ii. 14. And to be *careleſs* or *indifferent* in the cauſe of *Virtue and Righteouſneſs,* is being in the caſe of the Church of *Laodicea*; Rev. iii. 13; *I know thy Works, that thou art neither cold nor hot*; I *would that thou wert cold or hot*; *So then, becauſe thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my Mouth.* In matters of *Party and Factions*; in queſtions relating to the Powers and to the Doctrines of *Men*; God knows, men are apt to be *Hot enough*: But for enquiring impartially after the Knowledge of *Truth,* and for promoting the Practice of univerſal *Righteouſneſs and Charity*; 'twere well if the Warmeſt among Chriſtians in theſe corrupt Ages, were in their Zeal even ſo much as *luke-warm.*

4*thly,* and *Laſtly,* From what has been ſaid, we may learn the true Meaning of that Exhortation of St. *Paul*; 1 *Cor.* i. 10; *I beſeech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that —— there be no diviſions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgment.* His Meaning is not, that they muſt be all exactly of *one opinion* in every thing: For *ſuch* an Unity cannot poſſibly ariſe, but either from *perfect and infallible Knowledge,* which is *not attainable* in This World; or from *groſs Ignorance and Darkneſs,* which is an effect of great Corruption. But the plain meaning of St. *Paul* is, that they ought to be *joined together in the ſame* charitable *mind, and in the ſame* charitable *judgment* towards each other, *notwithſtanding* any differences in Opinion. Thus he expreſly explains himſelf, *Rom.* xv. 5; *God grant you to be like-minded one towards another*: He does not ſay, *like-minded* or of like judgment, concerning *Things*; For That is in no man's Power: But *like-minded,* or *alike well-affectioned,* towards *each Other's Perſons.* So likewiſe, *Eph.* iv. 3; *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace*: And how was That to be done? Was it by compelling men to pretend that they All think alike? No: For This, inſtead of Unity of Spirit in the Bond of Peace, is indeed nothing elſe, but either Unity of Opinion in the Bond of Ignorance, or Unity of Practice in the Bond of Hypocriſy. But the Apoſtle's meaning is,

Keep

Keep the Unity of the Spirit, *With all lowlineſs* (ſays he) *and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love.* Again: *Phil.* ii. 2; *That ye be like-minded*; how? why, *having the ſame love, being of one accord, of one mind; let nothing be done through ſtrife or vain-glory, but in lowlineſs of Mind.* St. *Peter* alſo explains himſelf after the ſame manner; 1 *Pet.* iii. 8; *Finally be ye all of one mind.* How? Is it by following each other ignorantly and implicitly? No: but, *having compaſſion* (ſays he) *one of another, love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.* This is That *Charity*, which whoſoever *has not*, the Text clearly affirms he cannot be a good Chriſtian: And whoſoever *has it*, cannot eaſily fail in any *Other* inſtances of Virtue; For *Love, is the Fulfilling of the Law.*

SERM. XLVIII.

SERMON XLIX.

The Nature of Relative Duties.

1 Col. iii. 20, 21, 22.

Children, obey your Parents in all things; for This is well-pleaſing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, leſt they be diſcouraged. Servants, obey in all things your Maſters according to the fleſh.

SERM. XLIX.

IT is the conſtant Method of St. *Paul* in all his Epiſtles, firſt to inlarge upon and explain diſtinctly the *particular* point or queſtion, which was the occaſion of his writing at That time to *That particular Church*; and then to add ſuch *general* exhortations to the practice of *all* Chriſtian Duties and Virtues, as might at all times be of Uſe to *All Churches*, and to *every Chriſtian* in all Ages and in every part of the World. Theſe *general* Exhortations are, in the main, the *ſame* in *All* his epiſtles; eaſy and plain, univerſal and unvaried, ſuited to all Capacities, and containing the moſt important and fundamental Principles of Religion. The *former part* of the ſeveral Epiſtles uſually relates to ſome *particular Controverſy* between the *Jewiſh and Gentile Converts*, which at That time gave Trouble

to

to the Apoſtles: And *Theſe parts* of his Writings *cannot* be rightly underſtood any other way, than by attending carefully to the *Occaſion* and *State* of the *particular queſtion* which he is there determining. And therefore it has been a great Error in theſe latter Ages of the World, and the Cauſe of many vain diſputes among Chriſtians, that, without attending to the Deſign and Scope of a Diſcourſe written in an argumentative manner, Men have frequently picked out and applied *to Themſelves* ſingle Paſſages, which, in the courſe of the Apoſtle's Argument, had plainly a View only to the State of the then *Jewiſh* or *Gentile Church*. From this *One* miſtake, it is evident, have ſprung *all* the vain Controverſies concerning *Faith* and *Works*, concerning *Juſtification* and *Sanctification*, concerning *Election* and *Reprobation*, and the like: wherewith while the Minds of Men have been needleſly diſtracted, they have been the *leſs apt* to attend to the *great and weightier Matters* of the Law, to the *moral* and *general Exhortations*, repeated and inculcated univerſally in *every* epiſtle, as things by *every* Chriſtian *indiſputably eaſy to be underſtood*, and *indiſpenſably neceſſary to be practiſed*.

The Words of my Text are part of the *general Exhortation*, which concludes the epiſtle to the *Coloſſians*. In the *Beginning* of This chapter the Apoſtle exhorts them to *ſet their affections* on *heavenly* things, to *mortify* every *vicious* and *inordinate appetite*, to lay aſide all *Malice* and *Contentiouſneſs* among themſelves, and to live in the practice of univerſal *Love, Charity and Good-Will*: And in the *Latter* part of the chapter, he recommends to them the *Relative* Duties of life; the Duties of *Husbands* and *Wives*, of *Children* and *Parents*, of *Maſters* and *Servants*, of *Superiours* and *Inferiours* in *all* Relations. *Children, obey your Parents in all things; for This is well-pleaſing unto the Lord: Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, leſt they be diſcouraged: Servants, obey in all things your Maſters according to the Fleſh.*

In diſcourſing upon theſe words; I ſhall, *Firſt, diſtinctly* take Notice of the ſeveral *Particulars* contained in the Text: And, *Secondly*, I ſhall thence deduce this *General* Obſervation; that the due Performance of the *Relative Duties* of Life, is a principal Means of obtaining both the Bleſſings of the *preſent World*, and the Happineſs of *That which is to come*.

I. In the *Firſt* place, That which ſtands *firſt and moſt obviouſly* obſervable in the Text, is this *Precept*; *Children, obey your Parents*. In his epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, the ſame Apoſtle expreſſes this Precept Thus: *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord; for This is Right: Honour thy Father and Mother, which is the firſt Commandment with Promiſe*; ch. vi. 1. In which expreſſion, there is an alluſion to the *Order* or *Placing* of the Commandments in the Law of *Moſes*; This being the Firſt in the *Second* Table, the Firſt of thoſe Commandments which declare our *Duty towards* Men; the Firſt to which is annexed expreſly a *particular Reward*; the Firſt *Commandment with Promiſe*. The natural obſervation ariſing from which particular, is, the *reaſonableneſs* and *goodneſs* of the *Great Commandments of God* both in the *Law* and the *Goſpel*. *God* begins where *Nature itſelf* does; making the *ſame* things to be the *prime* Foundations of *His Law*, which in the nature of things themſelves, without *Any* Law, were moſt reaſonable to be practiſed. The Goſpel carries indeed This and all other Moral Precepts to a much *higher* degree of improvement, requiring us to extend our Love towards *all* men, and our Deſire of doing good even unto *Enemies* themſelves. But the *prior* obligation, is That of *Gratitude* to *Benefactors*; and of making *juſt Returns* to Thoſe, from whom we have received the Benefits of Life. Nevertheleſs, as clear as this Obligation is, both in the Nature of Things and in the Command of God; yet, not Irreligion and Atheiſm only, but *Superſtition* alſo has found means to evade *This*, in like manner as it does all *other* moral and eternal Obligations. *God*, (ſays our Saviour; *Matt.* xv. 4; *God*) *commanded, ſaying, Honour thy Father and Mother: But ye ſay, Whoſoever ſhall ſay to his Father or his Mother, it is a Gift by whatſoever thou mighteſt be profited by Me*, (that is, it is given to the Service of the *Temple*, or to ſome other of what they then called *pious* Uſes,) *he ſhall be free*; he ſhall be diſcharged from all Obligation to relieve his neceſſitous Parents. *Thus* (ſays our Lord) *ye have made the commandment of God of none Effect by your Tradition.* Notions ſomewhat of the ſame nature have, in *All Ages* of the World, prevailed over ſuperſtitious and corrupt Minds; teaching

SERM. XLIX.

ing them to value things that promote outward Pomp and Show, and Distinctions of Men under Party-Denominations, more than Obedience to the eternal and unchangeable Duties of God's *Moral* Law.

2*dly*, The Next thing proper to be taken notice of in the Text, is, that the Particulars here mentioned of the Duty of *Children* and *Servants*, are Only *Instances* of the General *Exhortation*, designed to extend proportionably to persons in *All* Relative Stations and Circumstances of Life *whatsoever*. As Rom xiii. 7; *Render to* All, *their Dues*; *Tribute, to whom tribute is due*; *custom, to whom custom*; *fear, to whom fear*; *honour, to whom honour*. To *Magistrates*, there is due from the Subject *Obedience* according to the Laws of the Country, in matters not opposite to the Law of God; *Peaceableness and Quietness* under Government, and a willing *Contribution* towards the *Support* of it. To *Teachers*, or *Spiritual* Superiors, there is due from the People *Such* Respect, as to *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, appointed to exhort Men continually to the Practice of Virtue, and to assist in all the Administrations of Religion: Towards *These*, there ought to be in Men a Willingness to hear and be informed by them, and a readiness to observe and practise what they teach, not blindly and implicitely, (which is the Doctrine of *Rome*,) but in all things which they can *show* to be the *Doctrine and Commands of God*. To *Masters*, there is due from Servants *Diligence* and *Industry*, *Honesty* and *Fidelity*, *Submission* and *Obedience*, according to the Direction in the Text; *Servants, obey----your Masters according to the Flesh*; *not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of Heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto Men*. In like manner; Eph. vi. 7; *With good Will* (says he) *doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men*; *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free*. The only difference here to be observed, is, that whereas the *Servants* mentioned by the Apostle, were, in those days, *Slaves*, under the absolute Power of their Masters, without any Relief under the greatest oppressions; (for which reason St. *Peter* exhorts such to be patient under the severest hardships, considering that *it is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God indure grief, suffering wrongfully*: Whereas (I say) in the *Apostles days* the state of *Servants* was absolute *Slavery*, it is *Now* on the contrary always to be Understood, that the Duty and Obligation of those in the lowest Station towards their respective Superiors in *This* kind, is such only as arises from *Law* and *Contract*, and is wholly limited by those Measures. And This concerning the *several particular relative Persons*, to whom the Apostle designed his exhortation to extend.

3*dly*, The *Third* Particular observable in the Text, is, the unbounded manner in which the Apostle expresses the *General* Duty of *Subjection* to Superiors, in *every* Relative Station of Life: *Children, obey your Parents in* all *things*: *Servants, obey in* all *things your Masters according to the Flesh*. So elsewhere: *Let the Wives* (says he) *be subject to their own Husbands in* every *thing*: And Tit. ii. 9. *Exhort Servants to be obedient unto their own Masters*; *and to please them well in* all *things*. Reason, and the Nature of Things, and the general Usage of all language, showeth, that in these and all other the like expressions, the phrase, *in* every *thing*, and *in* all *things*, must necessarily be understood to mean only, *in* all *things* just, in *all things* lawful, in *all things that are* honest *and* fit *to be done*. In *Human* Writings, these *general* manners of expression, arising from the known and vulgar use of Language, are *never* misunderstood: And therefore to misunderstand them in the *Sacred* Books *only*, is meer Perverseness. The Gospel neither *inlarges* nor *diminishes* any *Superior's Power*; it neither *adds to*, nor *takes from* any *Inferior's Right*.

In *These* Cases, it only confirms and explains the Obligations of Nature; and inforces the *Practice* of the respective Duties, with stronger and more powerful *Motives*. As therefore in all *other* Writings, so in *Scripture* likewise; the true, the natural, and evident Meaning of such Phrases as these, in all *things*, *in* every *thing*, and the like; is not what the word, *all*, suggests in its *single* Signification; but what the *vulgar* sense of it is, in *such* expressions and sentences. When we are taught that the Commands of *God*, or the Laws of *Truth and Right*, are to be obeyed *in* all *things*; the *nature* of the *Thing*, not the *force* of the *single words*, shows that the Obedience is to be *universal* and *without exception*. In *other* cases, where

where the very *ſame words* are uſed; (as, in the Text, *Servants obey your Maſters in all things*;) the nature of the thing *There likewiſe* no leſs plainly ſhows, that this *obedience in all things* is to be *limited*, by its *conſiſtency* with the Commands of any *Superiour Maſter* either on Earth or in Heaven. In *All* language, the ſignification of *every word* neceſſarily depends upon the *other* words with which it is connected: And where no *Controverſy* is concerned, nor *Prejudice* interpoſes, it is always underſtood, and cannot but be underſtood to be ſo, by all Underſtandings, and by all Capacities equally, from the Higheſt to the Meaneſt. When the Scripture mentions *The* Everlaſting *God*, it is not the force of the word *Everlaſting*, but the application of it to the *Firſt Cauſe and Author of all things*, that makes it denote a true and abſolute *Eternity*: For when the ſame Scripture mentions the *everlaſting Mountains*, it is underſtood by all men both of the greateſt and of the ſmalleſt Underſtandings, that it there ſignifies only *ſuch* a Duration, as is proper to the Subject of which it is ſpoken. Theſe things are, *in their own Nature*, exceedingly evident: And yet where *Party*, or *Intereſt*, or *Controverſy* is concerned, it is wonderful to what a degree men have ſometimes, even in ſo *plain* a caſe, impoſed upon the *ignorant*, and upon the *learned* too. I ſhall mention but *One* Inſtance, and leave *Others* to be judged of by the ſame proportion. In the queſtion about *Tranſubſtantiation*, the Writers of the Church of *Rome* alledge with great confidence, that the *natural*, the *literal*, the *firſt and obvious* ſenſe of the words, *This is my Body*, is plainly in favour of *Their* ſide of the Queſtion. And yet in reality, the very contrary to This, is evidently true. For the *natural*, the *literal*, the *firſt* and *obvious* ſenſe of the *phraſe*, is not that which ariſes from the ſignification of the word *Body* ſingly, but That which ariſes from its natural ſignification in *ſuch* an expreſſion, wherein *commemorative Bread* is affirmed to be the *Body* of *Him who is commemorated thereby*. When a *Picture* is ſpoken of, as being the *perſon* it repreſents; the *natural*, the *literal*, the *firſt* and *obvious* ſenſe of the expreſſion, is not that it is *really*, but that it is *repreſentatively*, That perſon. When our Lord ſays, *I am the true Vine*; the queſtion is not what the word, *Vine*, naturally ſignifies in *other* caſes; but what it *There* moſt *naturally and obviouſly* ſignifies, when a *Teacher* calls *Himſelf* a *Vine*, and his *Followers* its *Branches*. When *Wiſdom* declares concerning herſelf, *Eccluſ.* xxiv. 21. *They that eat me, ſhall yet be hungry, and they that drink me, ſhall yet be thirſty*; the *natural* and *obvious*, nay, the *literal* ſignification of the whole Sentence, ariſes from what the terms, *eat* and *drink*, do *Then* moſt *naturally and obviouſly* ſignify, when a perſon is ſpeaking, not concerning Food, but about *imbibing* and *digeſting* a Doctrine. But to return from This Digreſſion.

4thly. The *Next* Particular obſervable in the Text, is the *Reaſon* or *Motive* annexed by the Apoſtle in order to inforce his exhortation: *For This* (ſays he) *is well-pleaſing unto the Lord.* In his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, (as I before obſerved;) after having laid down the ſame exhortation as in the text; inſtead of inforcing it, as he does here, with telling them that *This is well-pleaſing unto the Lord*; he cites the words of the *Commandment* itſelf, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother*; and adds, by way of obſervation, that This *is the Firſt Commandment with Promiſe*, ch. vi. 2. The *Promiſe* he means, is; *That thy days may be long, in the Land which the Lord thy God has given thee.* By which *Promiſe*, as delivered in the *Commandment to the Jews*, God by a wiſe and ſuitable Diſpoſition of Things, very aptly annexed the Bleſſing of *Long Life*, to *Them* that paid due Regard to Thoſe who were the Means of *giving them Life.* But then, even under the *Law*, (very *certainly*, though not ſo *explicitly* as in the Revelation of the *Goſpel*,) it is always to be underſtood, that in all Promiſes of This nature, there was a *further Reference* to a *Future* and a *Better Life.* Thus in the 11*th* to the *Hebrews*, the Apoſtle aſſures, that *Abraham* underſtood the promiſed inheritance, to be laid up for him in that heavenly *city which has foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.* Thus the prophetick Tradition among the antient *Jews*, that *Jeruſalem ſhould be built up with Saphirs*, Tobit. xiii. 16; is by St. *John* made the deſcription of That *City of God* which *cometh down from Heaven.* Thus our Saviour's Promiſe, that *the Meek ſhall inherit the Earth*, Matt. v. 5; may well have *Reference* at leaſt, if it be not expreſly applied by him in his firſt intention, to That *New Heaven and New Earth, wherein Righteouſneſs*

SERM. XLIX.

is to *dwell* for *ever*. Thus, to mention but One Inſtance more; That Expreſſion of *Ezekiel*, ch. xiii. 9. They ſhall not be in the *Aſſembly of my people, neither ſhall they be written in the Writing of the Houſe of Iſrael, neither ſhall they enter into the Land of Iſrael*; cannot be doubted but that implicitly means the ſame thing, as, in the New-Teſtament-language, being not *written in the Book of Life*.

5thly and *Laſtly*, From the *relative Antitheſis* in the reſpective parts of the text; *Children, obey your Parents in all things*; and, *Fathers, provoke not your Children to anger*: It is obſervable, that as in *Nature* in the frame and conſtruction of this *material* Fabrick of the Univerſe, all *operations* of the parts of *Matter* are *mutual* upon each other, for the Support and Preſervation of the Whole; ſo in *morality* and *religion*, All *Duties* are of reciprocal Obligation. Where-ever the Duty of the *Inferiour* is mentioned, it is always to be underſtood that the Duty of the *Superiour* is proportionably ſuppoſed. *Parents* are to ſupport, and be gentle towards their Children; *bringing them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* Eph. vi. 4. *Maſters* are to exact Service, not rigorouſly and cruelly, but with Mildneſs, and according to the Terms contracted for. *Governors in the* Church are not to *lord it over the Heritage of God*, nor to aſſume to themſelves dominion over the Conſciences of Men; but, as faithful Stewards of the Myſteries of God, to aſſiſt men in *underſtanding* the Will of God, and to exhort them continually to *practiſe* it in Peace and Love. *Magiſtrates* are to govern according to thoſe Inſtructions of *Job*. ch. xxix. 14; *I put on righteouſneſs, and it cloathed me; my judgment was as a Robe and a Diadem. I was eyes to the Blind, and feet was I to the Lame. I was a Father to the Poor; and the Cauſe which I knew not, I ſearched out.* Laſtly, *Princes*, or *Supreme Civil Governors*, are to uſe Power within the limits of Law and Reaſon: Conſidering the admonition of the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. vi. 2, *Give ear, you that rule the People, and that glory in the multitude of Nations; For Power is given you of the Lord, and Sovereignty from the Higheſt; who ſhall try your Works, and ſearch out your Counſels: ——— For he which is Lord over All ſhall fear no man's perſon, neither ſhall he ſtand in awe of any man's greatneſs: For he hath made the ſmall and great, and careth for All alike.*

II. Having thus at large conſidered the ſeveral diſtinct *Particulars* contained in the Text: I ſhall Now briefly from the Whole, deduce this *General* Obſervation; that the Due Performance of the *Relative Duties* of Life, is a principal Means of obtaining both the Bleſſings of the *preſent* World, and the Happineſs of *That which is to come*. As to the Happineſs of the *Life to come*; the Promiſe of *That* being annexed to the Obſervance of *All* God's Commandments in general, needs not here be particularly enlarged upon: It is ſufficiently implied in thoſe words of the Text, *This is well-pleaſing unto the Lord*. But what in This caſe is peculiarly remarkable, is, that the Bleſſings and Happineſs of the *preſent Life*, are *not only* by the Promiſe of God *annexed to*, but even in the Nature of things do eſſentially *conſiſt in*, the due Performance of theſe *Relative Duties*. As, in the *natural Body*, the Health and Preſervation of the *Whole* depends upon *every Part's* performing its proper office; So, in every *political Society*, *Inferiours and Superiours* in all the various ſtations of Life depend *mutually* upon each other, and the Welfare of the *Whole* upon the Duties of *Both*. *Superiours*, in the conſcientious performance of *their Duty*, are the *Protectors and Guardians* of the Rights and Properties of *Thoſe below them*: And *Inferiours*, acting under a Senſe of Duty, moved by *Love and Reaſon* more than by *Compulſion or Fear*, are the moſt ſolid Support of the Authority and Peace and Happineſs of *Thoſe above them*. The *Corruption and Depravity* of Mankind makes it *neceſſary*, by the intervention of Human *Laws*, to *compel* men *in ſome meaſure* to perform theſe reſpective Duties: But a true ſenſe of *religion*, and of the *Reaſonableneſs* and *Uſefulneſs* and *eſſential Obligation* of the Duties themſelves, would oblige them by a much ſtronger and ſecurer Tie, to do all the ſame things *freely and willingly, heartily and ſincerely, in publick and in private*; which the beſt and wiſeſt Laws can but compel thoſe who want ſuch a ſenſe of Religion, to do *unwillingly, ſlightly and ſuperficially, in publick Appearance only, and in the Sight of Men*. Religion therefore and true Virtue, if they prevailed in the World, would obtain the ſame happy Ends *fully and effectually*, which the beſt and wiſeſt Laws can do but *in part*; and Laws are made only to ſupply, in the beſt manner they can, the Want of

of true Religion and Virtue among Men. *The Law is not made for a righteous Man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for the ungodly and for ſinners, for the unholy and the profane*; 1 Tim. i. 9. Did men univerſally, from a *ſenſe* of the *Right* and *Reaſon* of the *thing itſelf*, live in an uniform and conſcientious Performance of the *Relative Duties of Life*; the Prophecies of That Great Happineſs which under *typical* Repreſentation is foretold as coming in the days of the *Meſſias*, would be *literally* fulfilled: *Iſ.* ii. 4; *They ſhall beat their ſwords into plough-ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning-hooks; nation ſhall not lift up ſword againſt nation, neither ſhall they learn war any more*: And ch. lx. 18, *Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy land, waſting nor deſtruction within thy borders; but thou ſhalt call thy Walls Salvation, and thy Gates Praiſe; —— Thy people alſo ſhall be All Righteous.* But however, even as things *Now* are; would *Superiours* in All Times and Places, who are the Great *Example* and *Direction* to the World, endeavour, each in their reſpective ſtations, to make uſe of That Power wherewith God has intruſted them, always to the Protection and Support of *Right*; the Benefits which would thence accrue to Mankind, even in this preſent imperfect and corrupt State, would be inconceivably Great. 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 3; *He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the Fear of God: And he ſhall be as the Light of the Morning, when the Sun riſeth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender Graſs ſpringing out of the Earth, by clear ſhining after Rain.* And *Pſ.* lxxii. 4; *He ſhall judge the People according unto Right, and defend the Poor — and puniſh the wrong-doer. — He ſhall come down like Rain into a fleece of Wool, even as the Drops that water the Earth: In His time ſhall the Righteous flouriſh, yea, and abundance of Peace ſo long as the Moon endureth;* SERM. XLIX.

SERMON

SERMON L.

The Inconsistency of the Love of God with the Love of the World.

1 JOH. ii. 15.

Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World: If any man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.

SERM. L.

THE Great End and Design of Religion, is, by the Tryal of mens Virtue and Integrity in the present World, to qualify them for the Happiness of That which is to come: That they who have been *Faithful* in a small and *temporary Trust*, committed to them *Here*; may hereafter be put in Possession of a never-fading *Inheritance*, which shall be *their Own* for ever. As our Saviour has largely and distinctly set forth this matter, in his Parable of the Unjust Steward, *Luke* xvi.

Mistaking this True End and Design of Religion, men have fallen into Two contrary Extremes: Some having framed to Themselves *such* a notion of Religion, as is *consistent* with the *Vices* of this present World; and Others,

OR

on the contrary, *ſuch* a one as is *not conſiſtent* with ſome of the moſt conſiderable and important *Duties* of *Life*. Some have placed the higheſt Excellency of Religion in *retiring* wholly *from* the World, ſo as to render themſelves altogether *uſeleſs* in it: And Others, on the contrary, imagining Religion principally to conſiſt in certain *Forms* and *Ceremonies*, or in the Profeſſion of certain *Syſtems* of *empty Opinions*; indulge themſelves in the Practice of known *Immoralities*, at the ſame time that they are moſt zealouſly religious. The proper Remedy for Both theſe Miſtakes, is to endeavour to give men a *juſt* idea of the *Nature* of True Religion; and of the Influence it ought to have upon mens whole Behaviour, with regard to the *World*, and to the things that are in it. For which Purpoſe I have choſen the words of the Apoſtle: *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World; If any man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* SERM. L.

In diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, 1*ſt*, *What* the Apoſtle here means by *the World, and the Things that are in it*; which he exhorts us, *not to love*. 2*dly*, *What* That *Love of the Father* is, with which the *Love of the World* is inconſiſtent. And 3*dly*, What are the principal *Reaſons and Motives*, upon which the Apoſtle here ſo earneſtly cautions men againſt That *Love of the World*, which he thus deſcribes as inconſiſtent with the *Love of God*.

I. What the Apoſtle here means by *the World*, and by *the Things that are in it*, which he exhorts us *Not to love*, he himſelf expreſly and diſtinctly explains in the words next following the Text: *For all that is in the World*, ſaith he, *the Luſt of the Fleſh, and the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of* the World. That is to ſay: Not *That World* which *God* has *created*, or any of the things that *he* has made in it; but *That World* which *Sinners* have faſhioned to themſelves, and which is entirely the Work of their own Invention. *Every Creature* of *God* is *Good*; and every thing that *he* has made may be made uſe of with Thankſgiving: But there is an *imaginary World*, which corrupt Minds have framed to themſelves in Perverſeneſs, by *Abuſe* and *Miſapplication* of the good Creatures of God. And concerning the *World* in *This ſenſe* of the word, this *Wicked* Form and Faſhion of a World, it may very well and properly be ſaid, what the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom* ſays concerning *Death*, ch. i. 13, that *God made it not*: 'Tis made entirely through *Enmity* to *Him*, and in direct Oppoſition to *His* Commands. The *Particulars* of which *the World* in *This ſenſe* conſiſts; the *wicked* and *corrupt World*, which is *not of the Father*, which is no part of the Creation of God; *all the things that are in* it, as the Apoſtle here expreſſes himſelf, are reducible under *Three* Heads.

The *Firſt*, is the Deſire of *unlawful* Pleaſures; all *Intemperance and Debauchery, Luxurioufneſs, Drunkenneſs, and Uncleanneſs*. And Theſe are ſtiled by the Apoſtle, *the Luſt of the* Fleſh, becauſe they are the things into which men are hurried by *Paſſion and Appetite*, which is what the Scripture ſtiles *Fleſh*; in oppoſition to the Dictates of *Reaſon and Religion*, which is what the Scripture calls being *led by the Spirit*. All the *Good things* of Life, which God has created to be *enjoyed* with *Temperance* and *Thankſgiving*, according to the Ends and Meaſures of *Nature*, within the Limits of *Reaſon, Sobriety* and *Good manners*, and conſiſtent with the more Noble Views and Improvements of *Religion*: All *Theſe* things, I ſay, are the Gifts and Bleſſings of *God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*, 1 Tim. vi. 17. But when men, inſtead of *governing* their *Paſſions and Appetites* by *Reaſon*, do on the contrary ſuffer their *Reaſon* to be over-ruled by *Paſſions and Appetites*; ſubverting the natural Order of God's Creation, and giving no attention to thoſe Superiour Faculties, which were deſigned to diſtinguiſh Men from the Beaſts that periſh: their Enjoyments in This caſe are of Such a nature, that they can neither *pray for* them *beforehand*, nor *return Thanks for* them *afterwards*, as *Bleſſings* of *God*; but are forced to reflect upon them with *Shame*, whether they will or no; as being conſcious that theſe things proceed *not* from *the Father* and Creator of the Univerſe, but from what the Apoſtle

SERM. L. here stiles *the World* by way of opposition; *That World*, which is an *Enemy* to God; and concerning which St. *Paul* speaks, when he says of Wicked men, that *the God of* This World *has blinded their minds*, 2 Cor. iv. 4.

This is the *First* Particular; *the Lust of the Flesh*. The *Second* Head, under which the Apostle here reduces *all the things that are in the World*, in the *wicked and corrupt* World, is the *unlawful* Desire of Riches; the Desire of *Riches* by *unjustifiable Means*, and to *no valuable Purposes*. And these are here stiled *the Lust of the* Eyes; because the Love of *Riches*, as *such*, and as it stands here distinguished from *Other* vitious affections; the *Covetous Desire* of *Riches* for *Riches sake*, without any regard to the True and Beneficial Uses of them; is but *feeding the* Eyes with a mere fruitless View of unprofitable Treasure, with the empty Shows of Vanity and Deceit. *What Good is there*, says the Wise man, *Eccles.* v. 11, *What Good is there to the Owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their* Eyes? *There is One alone*, says he, *and there is not a Second*, ch. iv. 8, *yea, he hath neither Child, nor Brother; yet is there no end of all his Labour, neither is his* Eye *satisfied with Riches; neither saith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also Vanity.* The Phrase, *neither is his* Eye *satisfied with Riches*, is the same as what he elsewhere expresses, *Prov.* xxvii. 20, *Hell and destruction are never full; so the* Eyes *of man are never satisfied.* And from hence have been derived those *particular manners of speaking* in Scripture, where *Liberality* is stiled a *Bountiful* Eye, and a *Single* (or *Open*) Eye; and *Covetousness*, an *Evil* (or *niggardly*) Eye; and the like. Whenever *Riches* are desired and employed as Instruments of *Good*, they are Then indeed *real Blessings of Providence*; *Blessings* to the *Possessors* of them, whom they enable to have *Great Influence* in promoting Justice, Righteousness, Charity, and every Other good Work in the World; And *Blessings* to *Others*, who are Partakers of the *Effects* of those good *Influences*. But when they are only what the Apostle here stiles the *Lust of the* Eyes; the Food either of *Covetousness* merely, *without* Use; or of *Vanity* and *Folly*, in an *ill* Use of them: The Desire of them, in That case, is not an *Appetite* of *God*'s creating; 'Tis not *of the Father*, but *of the World*; 'Tis the *creature* merely of a *perverted Imagination*, and of a *corrupt Will*; 'Tis a *Desire* that will perpetually put men upon *obtaining* Wealth by *ill* Methods, and upon *employing* it in *nothing Good*. The *Temptations* that *This Appetite* exposes men to, are the Foundation of great Corruption. *They that will be rich*, (says the Apostle,) *fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition: For the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil: Which while Some coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows*: That is, they have exposed themselves to be seduced into such corrupt Practices, the avoiding whereof is That Part of true Religion, which St. *James* calls a man's *keeping himself unspotted from the World*.

Prov. xxii. 9.

The *Third* Head, under which the Apostle here reduces *all the things that are in the World*; in the *wicked and corrupt World*, considered as opposite to *God*; is *Ambition*, or the *unlawful* Desire of *Dominion and Power*. And This is here stiled by the Apostle the Pride *of Life*, because both the *Desire* of *obtaining Power* by *unrighteous* methods, and the *Pleasure* of *exercising* it in ways of *Insolence* and *Oppression*, have their *whole Foundation* in *Pride*; in a *presumptuous* Imagination, that *Right* and *Reason* and *Equity* are things of *No reality*, and which may at any time give place to *Our Wills and Pleasures*. *Power*, considered in itself, as derived from *God* the *Fountain* of Power, and as being the *Great Instrument* of securing *Right and Justice* in the World; is indeed justly valuable, and most reasonably attended with the Highest Marks of *Dignity and Esteem*. Upon which account, not only *Angels* in *Heaven*, but *Magistrates* also upon *Earth*, are in some passages of Scripture called *Gods*; and *God himself* is, upon the same ground, stiled by *Antient Writers* the * *Fountain of Divinity*: Not, the *Fountain of the Deity*, as the words were in after-times *ignorantly* misapplied: (For That, is

* πηγὴ θεότητος, not πηγὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ. See *Reply to Dr.* Waterland's *Defence*, p. 5, 48, 49, 219. And, *Observations on Dr.* Waterland's *2d Defence*, p. 53.

stiling

ſtiling *God* the *Fountain* of *Himſelf*:) But the Fountain of *Divinity*, meaning all That *Dignity*, *Authority and Power*, which is in Scripture at any time aſcribed either to *Angels* or to *Men*. *Power*, I ſay, in *This ſenſe*, as derived from God, and exerciſed to His Glory, and to the Benefit of the World; is indeed greatly valuable, and moſt juſtly attended with all poſſible Marks of Honour and Regard. But the *Deſire of Power* for the Purpoſes of *Ambition* only, and for the *Pleaſure* of bearing *Rule*; is what the Apoſtle here, with great propriety and ſtrictneſs calls *The Pride of Life*; which *is not of the Father, but of the World*. 'Tis *That Pride*, or *That* ſetting up of *Self-Will* in oppoſition to *Reaſon and Equity*, which is the Ground and Foundation of almoſt *every* Immorality. The *Intemperances* and *Debaucheries* Men are guilty of, for want of *Government* of *Themſelves*, are moſt properly indeed included under the *Firſt Head*, which is the *Luſt of the Fleſh*. The *Second Head*, which is the Luſt *of the Eyes*, or the *Covetous Deſire of Riches* for *Riches* ſake, is alſo frequently the occaſion of *much Corruption*, of many and great *particular Acts* of *Injuſtice* and *Hardſhip* towards *Others*. But the moſt *general* and *extenſive* cauſe of an *habitually injurious and oppreſſive* Temper, is This *Pride of Life*; this Love of *Power*, *Domination*, and *Self-Will*. From hence uſually ariſe *Wars*, *Deſolations*, *Tyrannies*, and all the *Great*, *Extenſive*, and *Mercileſs Oppreſſions*, which totally extinguiſh that univerſal Benevolence towards Mankind, which is the *Charity* repreſented in Scripture as *the Fulfilling of the* whole *Law*. To the ſame Cauſe alſo are owing generally, all the *Great* Breaches of our Duty towards *God*. For, *Whence* ariſes That ſtrange *Negligence* and *Unconcernedneſs* for the Diſcovery of *Truth*, which is the Cauſe of almoſt all the Irreligion and Superſtition in the World; but from this *Pride* of imagining, that our own *Wills*, *Pleaſures* and *Paſſions*, are *Guides* preferable to the *Reaſon* and *Truth* of things? And whence comes it to paſs, that ſo many *monſtrouſly abſurd Opinions* and *Idolatrous Practices* have prevailed in the Nations of the World; contrary to all the common *Senſe* and *Reaſon* of Mankind, contrary to the *natural* Dictates of every man's own *Conſcience*, and in oppoſition to the Proteſtations and perpetual Endeavours of all *Rational* and *Virtuous* Men: Whence, I ſay, has This come to paſs; but that it has beſt ſerved the Purpoſes of *Ambition* and *Tyranny*, to keep Men in ſuch *Ignorance* by all poſſible *Frauds*, and in the continuance of ſuch *Practices* by all the cruel Methods of *Violence*? And This may abundantly ſuffice for explication of the *Firſt* Particular; *What* the Apoſtle here means by the *World* which he exhorts us *not to love*; and by *the Things that are in the World*, which (he ſaith) are *not of the Father, but of the World*.

II. I am to conſider *What* That *Love of the Father* is, with which the *Love of the World* is here declared to be inconſiſtent. Many there are, who by this phraſe of *loving God*, ſeem to have meant nothing more than a mere *ſpeculative imagination*, an *unintelligible enthuſiaſtick Warmth of Affection*, a *notional abſtract Zeal*; ſometimes *withdrawing* Men wholly into a retirement from the moſt *uſeful Duties of Life*, and ſometimes *not withdrawing them* from the *Vicious Practices of the World*. But the Scripture-ſenſe of *loving God*, is expreſly declared to be the *Keeping his Commandments*, the looking upon *Him* as our *Supreme Governor*, and moſt *Bountiful Benefactor*; as a *Reaſonable* Governor, whoſe Commands are to be obeyed not only out of *Neceſſity*, but out of *Choice*, with *cheerfulneſs* and *affection*, in *Preference* to every thing that would entice us to tranſgreſs them. And This being the caſe, the reaſon immediately and evidently appears, why, *if any man love the World*, the *World* in the ſenſe already explained, *the Love of the Father* cannot be *in him*. For, in the Nature of Things, where-ever two inconſiſtent Objects offer themſelves *in competition*, the *Object preferred* is the *Object loved*; and the preferring or chooſing one before the other, is manifeſtly inconſiſtent with preferring the Other before That. *If any Man* therefore *loves the World*, *That World* here deſcribed by the Apoſtle, which is *not of the Father*; the *Love of the Father* cannot poſſibly be *in him*: For *no man can ſerve Two Maſters*. Of neceſſity he muſt *either hate the one, and love the Other*; *or elſe* he muſt *hold to the* other, *and deſpiſe* the firſt: He *cannot ſerve God and Mammon*, Matt. vi. 24. What ever be a man's ultimate View and Aim; (as every man always has *ſome* principal and ultimate View;) by *This* will the generality, at leaſt of the *Material* Actions of his life, always be determined. If the Love of *Truth* and *Reaſon* and *Right*, (or, which is the ſame thing,

SERM. L.

thing, a Regard to the *God* of Truth and Right,) be his *governing Principle*; his *Deſires* after, and his *Uſe* of, the *Pleaſures, Riches, and Power* of *This World*, will, according to the natural Order and Deſign of God's creation, always be *regulated by*, and *made ſubſervient to*, thoſe Greater and more Noble Ends. On the contrary, if theſe things, not as they are *In* the *world*, but as they are *Of* the *world, and not of the Father*; if theſe things, in the manner they are here deſcribed by the Apoſtle, *the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*; be the Object of a Man's Deſires, principally and ultimately, as the main End which he has continually in View; it cannot be but he will purſue his *Pleaſures*, without regard to the limitations of Reaſon and Religion; he will heap up unto himſelf *Riches*, by Methods inconſiſtent with Juſtice, Equity and Charity; he will endeavour to raiſe himſelf to *Honour* by mean and unworthy Compliances; and he will make Uſe of *Power* to arbitrary and unreaſonable Purpoſes. And for *This cauſe*, theſe things are in Scripture repreſented as being Enemies to God: So that, *if any man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* With regard to

Rom. xii. 1. *Pleaſure* in particular, the Apoſtle St. *Paul* exhorts: *I beſeech you, brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye preſent your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reaſonable Service; And be not conformed to This*

Rom. viii. 7. *World*: For *the Carnal mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be: So then they that are in the Fleſh, cannot pleaſe God.* And St. *Peter*, 1 Pet. i. 13, 14. *Be ſober,* —— *as obedient children; Not faſhioning yourſelves according to the former Luſts, in your ignorance; But, as He which hath called you is holy, ſo be Ye Holy in all manner of converſation.* And St. *James*, ch. iv. 4: *Ye Adulterers and Adultereſſes; know ye not, that the Friendſhip of the World is Enmity with God; Whoſoever therefore will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God.* In like manner with regard to *Riches*: In the paſſage before-cited, *They that will be Rich*, ſaith St. *Paul*; that is, they who make *Riches* their ultimate *End* and *View*, will *fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many Fooliſh and Hurtful Luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition*, 1 Tim. vi. 9. And therefore in the ſame chapter, ver. 17. he mentions *Truſting in Riches* and *Truſting in the Living God*, as direct *Oppoſites* to each other. Laſtly, with Regard to the *Honours and Eſteem* of Men, and the corrupt and unworthy Compliances, by which the *Pride of Life* leads Men to aim at *Falſe Reputation* and *Power*; *Do I* (ſays the Apoſtle) *ſeek to pleaſe men? for if I yet pleaſed Men, I ſhould not be the Servant of Chriſt*, Gal. i. 10.

In *This* ſenſe therefore, and for *theſe Cauſes*, it is, that the *Love of the World*, and the *Love of God*, are in the Text declared to be inconſiſtent with each other. And as He who *loves the World*, the *Wicked World* in the ſenſe now explained, cannot have the *Love of the Father in him*: So, on the reverſe, if any Man has *the Love of the Father in him*, that is, acts ſteddily and immoveably upon the Principles of Truth and Virtue; to *Him* will the *World*, the *wicked and corrupt* part of the World, neceſſarily bear a *Hatred*, Joh. xv. 19. *If ye were of the World, the World would love his own; but becauſe ye are not of the World, but I have choſen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you.* And ch. xvii. 14. *The World hath hated them, becauſe they are not of the World.* The *Reaſon and Ground* of which Procedure, is excellently expreſſed by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. ii. 12. *Becauſe the Righteous is not for Our Turn, and he is clean contrary to our Doings; he upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our Infamy the Tranſgreſſions of our education. He profeſſeth to have the Knowledge of God, and* —— *was made to reprove our Thoughts.*

III. The *Third* and *Laſt* thing I propoſed, was to conſider the *Reaſons and Motives* upon which the Apoſtle here ſo earneſtly cautions Men againſt that *Love of the World*, which he thus deſcribes as inconſiſtent with the *Love of God*. Its *Inconſiſtency with the Love of God*, that is, of our *Supreme Good* and *ultimate Happineſs*; is itſelf *One* principal and ſufficient *Motive*. But *This* and *all other Motives* whatſoever, are *included in*, or *reducible to*, what

the

the Apoſtle alledges in the words following my Text, ver. 17; *The world paſſeth away, and the Luſt thereof; but He that doth the Will of God, abideth for ever.* There *can* be *nothing* in *This World* worth purchaſing at the Expence of incurring the Divine diſpleaſure. For all the things that are in the World, even thoſe that are *innocent*, much more the *Sinful* ones here mentioned by the Apoſtle, are *obtained* with Uneaſineſs and much Uncertainty, are *poſſeſſed* with much Mixture of Diſſatisfaction, are *preſerved* with continual Fear and Hazard of loſing them; And, when poſſeſſed in the higheſt Perfection, and for the longeſt Period, muſt of neceſſity paſs away in a very few years, to return no more for ever. That Habit of Mind, which is founded in the *Love of Truth*, and in the *Practice of Virtue*, is the only Thing that will continue and improve for ever into a compleat felicity in the eternal Kingdom of God.

SERM. L.

SERMON LI.

The Folly of mocking at Sin.

PROV. xiv. 9.

Fools make a mock at Sin.

SERM. LI.

THERE is nothing, concerning which Men of great Spirits are more apt to make a wrong Judgment, than concerning the Notion and true Extent of *Courage* and Magnanimity. Courage is a Braveneſs of Mind, conſiſting and ſhowing forth it ſelf in a juſt *Contempt of Danger*. And becauſe this is a Virtue moſt uſually found in men of *better condition*, and of a *good education*; it is therefore generally accompanied with more *Reputation and Honour*, with more *Value and Eſteem* in the World, than moſt Other ſingle Virtues. For this reaſon, thoſe who *are*

not

not indued with this Virtue, are yet very desirous of being *thought to be* so; and, as That which is most *esteemed* is always most in danger of being *counterfeited*, False *Courage* is very apt to supply the Place and the Want of *True*. For there *is* a Courage, which deserves not That Name; and there *is* a Hardiness, which is *not* a *Virtue*, but a *Vice*. Something of this Nature there may be observed in the instance of almost *every* Virtue. *Superstition*, and *Forms*, and outward *Ceremonies*, too usually supply the Place of true *Piety towards God*. *Covetousness* calls it self *Frugality*; and the *name* of *Generosity* often covers the *real* crime of *Profuseness*. The most unchristian Vices of *Uncharitableness* and *Persecution* frequently pass under the Title of *Zeal*; and *Love* towards *God*, is (in some men's opinion) excellently expressed by *Hatred* towards their *Brethren*, towards Men very often much more pious than themselves. Thus likewise in the case of *Courage*; *Fool-hardiness* too often puts on the Garb of This Virtue; and a senseless pretending to *despise*, what ought not and cannot be despised, serves instead of *really contemning* such Dangers, as ought to be contemned. Now the way to *distinguish* rightly, *when* Courage *is* really that Virtue which the Name denotes, is to consider carefully its true Definition: Which, (as I before observed,) is This; It is a Greatness or Braveness of Mind, consisting and showing forth it self in a just *Contempt of Danger*. Where therefore the Contempt of Danger is *just* and *well-grounded*, there such Contempt is the True Virtue of Courage, a true Greatness and Bravery of Mind: But where the Contempt of Danger is *neither reasonable nor just*, there it is *not* Courage, but *Fool-hardiness* and *Madness*. For want of observing this plain distinction it comes to pass, that whereas it is True Greatness and Bravery of Mind, for a Man to hazard his Life in the Defence of his *Country*, in Defence of the *common Rights and Liberties of* Mankind, in opposition to the unjust Invasions of ambitious *Tyrants*, and the Great *Oppressors* of the World; *contempt of Danger*, in This case, being *just and well-grounded*, because a Man hazards Himself for the *Publick Benefit*, and for the *preventing* a much *greater and more extensive Evil*, than the Loss of his own single Life: From hence passionate and unreasonable Men ignorantly call it *Courage*, to hazard their Lives in their *own* private *Quarrels*; where *Contempt of Danger* is, on the contrary, neither *reasonable nor just*; because, neither is the Danger at all needful to be run into, nor is the Benefit proposed to be obtained by it, in any manner equal to the Evil hazarded. Again: Whereas it is True Greatness of Mind, to be *above* all vain *Superstitions*, to *despise* all false and groundless *Imaginations*, not to be terrified with *empty Phantoms*, nor Fear *where no Fear is*; hence weak and profane Men have ridiculously attempted, to cause it to be looked upon as a piece of Courage and Gallantry, to *despise* the *real* Differences of Good and Evil; to *mock* at *Truth* in common with *Error*, and at *Religion* and *Virtue* equally with *Superstition*; to affect to be *above* the Obligations even of the most *reasonable* and *necessary Laws*, without which no *Order*, no *Government*, no *Peace* could possibly subsist in the World; lastly, to dare *undauntedly to revile the Maker of all things*, and show their *Fearlessness* even of *God himself*, by openly trampling upon his *Commandments* in their *Lives*, and reproaching his *Name* by *vain Oaths and profane Speeches*. The Fortitude of these Men, is like *that* Courage of a Soldier, who not daring to do his common Duty against the publick Enemy, should be perpetually showing his Prowess in bravely refusing to obey the Orders of his proper Commander. And the *Liberty* These Heroes in Vice promise to their Followers, in discharging them from all Obligations of Virtue and from all Fear of God, is excellently described by St. *Peter*, in his 2d epistle, ch. ii. 18; *When they speak great swelling words of Vanity, they allure through the Lusts of the Flesh, those that were clean escaped from Them who live in Error; While they promise them Liberty, they themselves are the Servants of Corruption; For of whom a Man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*. These are the persons, who, in the *worst* and *highest*

Sense

SERM. LI.

Senſe of the Phraſe, *make a Mock at Sin*; and who are accordingly in Scripture repreſented as being guilty of the *worſt* and *higheſt* degree *of Folly*. *Fools*, that is, thoſe who in a *ſingular* manner, and by way of *emphaſis* or diſtinction *above* all Others, deſerve the Name of Fools, are They which *make a Mock at Sin*. *Weakneſſes* there are in *all* Men; and the *Moſt* are too often guilty of ſuch Actions, as would in ſtrictneſs rank them, in thoſe *particulars* at leaſt, among the *Unwiſe*. But the *compleat* character of Folly, or that which renders a Man in his *whole* denomination, according to the Scripture-ſenſe, a *Fool*; is the *making a mock at Sin*. Not, being deluded into it by *Ignorance* or *Miſtake*; Not, being ſeduced into it by *Inadvertency* or *Surprize*; But, *knowingly and deliberately* looking upon it as a *trivial matter*; mocking at it as a thing *harmleſs*, and *of no great Danger*; This is the proper *Eſſence*, This, (if I may ſo ſpeak) is the *Perfection* of *Folly*. Nevertheleſs, becauſe even of *This*, there are *Differences and Degrees*; and of the *Mockers* here ſpoken of by the Wiſe Man, there are *Diverſe kinds*; I ſhall therefore in the following Diſcourſe endeavour briefly, but diſtinctly, to ſhew; *1ſt*, What is *meant* more *particularly*, by *making a* Mock *at Sin*; *2dly*, Upon what *grounds or reaſons*, Men are tempted to be guilty of the ſeveral degrees of This Vice; and *3dly*, How *weak* all thoſe Grounds really are, and how *great* the *Folly* of Acting upon them.

I. In the *Firſt* place, as to the explication of the Phraſe, *making a* Mock *at Sin*; there are three ſorts of Sinners, who, in their ſeveral Degrees, may juſtly be charged with This Guilt. Of the

1ſt and *higheſt* Degree, are thoſe whom I have partly *already* deſcribed, who eſteem it a piece of *Courage* to deſpiſe all Religion, and a *Greatneſs of Mind* to deride all the Obligations of Virtue. Theſe are the Perſons the Pſalmiſt means, when he elegantly riſes by *Steps* in his deſcription of Sinners from the loweſt degree of Wickedneſs to the higheſt; *Pſ.* i. 1; *Bleſſed is the man, that hath not walked in the Counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtood in the way of Sinners, and hath not* ſat *in the* Seat *of the* Scornful. The Scornful, are thoſe whom the Prophet *Jeremy* repreſents under the *ſame* Character, and in the Uſe of the *ſame* word, as the Wiſe man in the Text; *Jer.* xv. 17; *I ſat not in the Aſſembly of the* Mockers. To ſit, (the word uſed both by *Jeremiah* and by the *Pſalmiſt*,) ſignifies a *fixed, determinate, ſecure, reſolute* eſtabliſhment in a *Habit* of Wickedneſs; whereas *walking*, or *ſtanding*, in the way of Sinners, repreſents only *particular* wicked *Actions*. And the Seat of the Scornful, (which is the *Pſalmiſt's* phraſe,) ſignifies the *Higheſt Power* and *Dominion* of Impiety. Juſt as *our Saviour*, in the *Revelations*, elegantly deſcribes the Tyranny of the Antichriſtian Church, by calling it *The* Throne *of Satan*; Rev. ii. 13; *I know thy Works, and where thou dwelleſt, even where Satan's Seat*, (in the Original it is, *where Satan's* Throne) *is*. The Perſons who, in *This* ſenſe, *make a mock at Sin*, are the *Atheiſts*; and the *openly Profane*; Thoſe who think it *Wit*, to turn the moſt *ſerious* matters into *Ridicule*; and commit the moſt *unjuſt and unrighteous Actions*, without Any reluctancy or *Abhorrence*. Theſe are the Perſons whom *Solomon* deſcribes, *Prov.* x. 23; *It is as* Sport *to a Fool, to do miſchief*; and ch. xxvi. 18; *As a Madman who caſteth Firebrands, Arrows and Death; ſo is the man that deceiveth his Neighbour, and ſaith, Am not I in ſport?* The *ſame* ſort of Perſons, are in the New *Teſtament* mentioned by St. *Jude*, ver. 17. of his Epiſtle; *Remember*, ſaith he, *the words which were ſpoken before of the Apoſtles of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, how they told you there ſhould be* Mockers *in the laſt time, who ſhould walk after their own ungodly Luſts*.

They who think it an *Objection* againſt the Truth of Chriſtianity, that there ſhould be found, even in the World that calls itſelf *Chriſtian*, ſo much Open Profaneneſs and Impiety as there is; may do well to obſerve, how diſtinctly theſe things are *foretold* in the New Teſtament; and conſequently that the *Fulfilling of them* is not an Argument *againſt*, but a ſtrong Evidence *for* the truth of revealed Religion.

2dly;

SERM. LI.

2*dly*; The *next* ſort of Sinners, who may juſtly be charged with *making a Mock at Sin*, are thoſe, who do not indeed in *Words*, like thoſe before-mentioned; but yet, in their *Actions*, do equally bring Contempt upon Religion. In their *Profeſſion* they pretend to *believe in God*, but their *Practice* is the ſame with that *of Atheiſts and Infidels*. Theſe are elegantly deſcribed by St *Paul*; Tit. i. 16; *They* profeſs, *that they know God*; *but in* Works *they deny him*; *being abominable, and diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* This *practical Inſult* upon Religion, This *Contempt* of Virtue and Goodneſs in men's *Lives and Actions*, is as *really* in the Sight of *God*, though not ſo *offenſively* in the Eye of the *World*, a *making a Mock at Sin*, in the Senſe of the Text; as the moſt *profane Speeches* even of *profeſſed Atheiſts*.

3*dly*; To *make a Mock at Sin*, may, in the *laſt* place, ſignify, entertaining ſo *ſlight* an Opinion of the *Evil and Danger* of Sin, as makes men who are *not* entirely profligate, yet content themſelves with *diſtant* reſolutions of future Repentance, and in the mean time ſpeak Peace to themſelves in the Practice of Unrighteouſneſs, or in the Enjoyment of unlawful Pleaſures. This may properly enough be called, though not in ſo *high* a ſenſe as the forementioned Inſtances, a *making a Mock at Sin*. It is a *ſeeming* to be *afraid* of it, and yet *not really* abhorring it. It is entring voluntarily into the Snare of the Devil, and yet not daring to reſolve to continue in it. It is running into a Danger, with a Deſign to come out of it again; *as a Bird haſteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.* In a word; it is *playing* with the Inſtruments of *Death*, and *ſporting* with *Deſtruction*; for want of *ſeriouſly* and *in earneſt* conſidering, what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands of the Living God, whoſe Wrath is a conſuming Fire. The Deſcription of *Leviathan* in the Book of *Job*; ch. xli. 5; may very naturally be applied to This Purpoſe; *Wilt thou play with him as with a Bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy Maidens? Shall the Companions make a Banquet of him? ſhall they part him among the Merchants? Canſt thou fill his Skin with barbed irons, or his Head with Fiſh-ſpears? Lay thine hand upon him, remember the Battle, do no more.*

II. And now having ſhown particularly, what is meant by this phraſe of *making a mock at Sin*; I proceed, in the 2*d* place, to conſider *upon what Grounds or Reaſons* men are tempted to be guilty of the ſeveral degrees of this Vice. And

1*ſt*, As to thoſe *Sitters in the Seat of the Scornful*; thoſe *profane* Spirits, who eſteem it a mark of *Courage* to deſpiſe all Religion, and a *Greatneſs of Mind* to deride all the Obligations of Virtue: The *only* Ground *Theſe* have to go upon, is *Atheiſm* and *Infidelity*. Either they muſt disbelieve the *Being of God*, and diſclaim all difference of good and evil, and renounce in general all expectation of a future State; or at leaſt they muſt reject all divine *Revelation*, caſting behind them all the Promiſes and Threatnings of God, and denying that he will ever judge men according to their Works. This is excellently repreſented to us by St. *Peter*, in his Second Epiſtle; ch. iii. 3; *There ſhall come*, ſaith he, *in the laſt days Scoffers, walking after their own Luſts, and ſaying, Where is the Promiſe of his coming? For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were, from the Beginning of the Creation.* The Perſons the Apoſtle here deſcribes, looked upon all things as going on, it ſeems, in a conſtant and neceſſary Courſe of Nature: One generation of men paſſed away, and another came in the room of it; but the World remained ſtill as it was; And thus, for ought *They* knew, things might hold on for ever. *The thing which Hath been*, they thought, *is that which Shall be*; *and that which Is done, is That which ſhall be done*; *and there is no New thing under the Sun.* Eccl. i. 9. Upon This foundation, the ſame kind of Debauchees argue with themſelves in *All* Ages; *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die. Come ye, ſay they, I will fetch Wine*, Iſ. lxvi. 12, *and we will fill ourſelves with ſtrong drink, and to morrow ſhall be as This day, and much more abundant.* There is a moſt elegant deſcription of This ſort of Sinners, in the 2*d* chapter of the Book of *Wiſdom*; ver. 1; *The Ungodly ſaid, reaſoning with themſelves but not aright*;

SERM. LI.

——*We are born at all adventures, and we ſhall be hereafter as though we had never been; for the Breath in our Noſtrils is as Smoak, and a little Spark in the moving of our Heart:* ——*Come on therefore let us enjoy the good things that are preſent, and let us ſpeedily uſe the creatures like as in youth:* ——*Let us oppreſs the poor righteous man, let us not ſpare the widow, nor reverence the gray hairs of the aged; Let our Strength be the Law of Juſtice, for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth.* Thus the *only* foundation *This kind of Mockers* build upon, is the Hope that there will be *no* future ſtate, *no* judgment to come.

2*dly*, The *ſecond* ſort; thoſe who pretend to *believe* a *God*, and *another life* after this, and yet live as viciouſly as if they believed it *not*. The manner of *Theſe*, is to flatter themſelves with a Notion, that *Sin* is *not* of ſo dangerous a nature, as the Preachers of the Goſpel repreſent it; that *Morality*, or Righteouſneſs of Life, is not abſolutely of indiſpenſable importance; and that God will be very well ſatisfied with a *Form* of Godlineſs with a *Zeal* for *Names and Diſtinctions* of Religion, though not accompanied with *Moral Virtue*. And then

3*dly*; As to the *laſt* ſort of Men, who (I ſaid) might alſo juſtly be charged with being in ſome degree guilty of the ſame Vice of *making a Mock at Sin*; namely, thoſe who are really ſenſible of the Neceſſity of true Repentance and Amendment, and yet at the preſent ſpeak Peace to themſelves in the Practice of Unrighteouſneſs, or in the Enjoyment of unlawful Pleaſures: The *only* Foundation *Theſe* can poſſibly go upon, is an artificial Deſign of ſecuring to themſelves Both *Worlds*, and of ingroſſing *More* Happineſs than either God or Nature deſigned them; by enjoying ſecurely the Pleaſures of *Sin* for a Seaſon, and at the End by Repentance obtaining the Reward of *Virtue* likewiſe. This is what the Apoſtle calls, *mocking of* God; *Gal.* vi. 7; and is indeed more truly a *mocking* or *deceiving* of Themſelves. As will appear, if we proceed now, in the *Third* place,

III. To conſider, how *Weak* all the forementioned *Grounds or Reaſons* are, upon which men are tempted to be guilty of the ſeveral Degrees of this Vice; and conſequently how *Great* the *Folly* is of Acting upon thoſe Grounds: Fools *make a Mock at Sin*. And

1*ſt*; As to that *higheſt* degree of *Profane Mockers*, who have *no other* Hope to reſt upon but that of *Atheiſm and Infidelity*; *Their* Folly is *greater* than can be expreſſed in words, or than can rightly be conceived by any Imagination. For, *What* is the State of ſuch a perſon, when God taketh away his Soul? Can he be *ſure* that there is *no God?* or can he *demonſtrate* to himſelf, that there will be no future State? The hardieſt *Unbeliever* never yet pretended to have *demonſtration* in this caſe. And if he had, yet all the Comfort, all the Hopes, that could be built even upon *That*, would be but the Hope of a Beaſt, the Expectation of periſhing as if he had never been. But ſince there *can* be *no* ſuch demonſtration, on the ſide of Atheiſm; the conſequent Poſſibility on the *other* ſide, that there may *be* a *God*, proves the Folly of the profane Mocker to be *intolerable*; the *Probability* that there *is* a God, ſtill *increaſes* That Folly; the *Certainty*, the *Demonſtration*, that there *cannot but be* a God, ſhows it to be what *Solomon* elegantly ſets forth in that accumulative Expreſſion; *Eccleſ.* vii. 25; *the* Wickedneſs *of Folly, even of Fooliſhneſs and* Madneſs. For if there *is* a God, as the Works of Nature demonſtrate that there is; both *Reaſon itſelf* declares, and *Revelation* fully confirms, that he *will* govern the World in Righteouſneſs, and in the End judge every man according to his Works. That *poor* Objection of the Scoffers mentioned by St. *Peter*, that all things *hitherto* continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation, and that therefore they *never* will be otherwiſe; diſcovers the extreme Shortneſs of Thoſe men's Underſtandings, who conſider not that God with much long-ſuffering gives men Space of Repentance, and can as eaſily judge the World after a Thouſand years as after One day's ſpace. Upon which delay of his Lord's Coming, if any wicked Servant flatters himſelf

himſelf that he will not come at all, and upon That Aſſurance of Impuni- SERM. ty hardens himſelf in his Impiety; *The Lord of that Servant* will *come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the Hypocrites; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* For, *as in the days that were before the Flood, men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the Day that Noah entered into the Ark; And knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away:* And, *as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they ſold, they planted, they builded; But the ſame day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimſtone from Heaven, and deſtroyed them all: Even thus* (ſays our Lord) *ſhall it be, in the day when the Son of Man is revealed;* St. Luke xvii. 30; Then ſhall the Lord *convince* ungodly men of all *their hard* and profane *Speeches which they have ſpoken againſt him*: And the wicked, ſeeing the Salvation of the righteous, *ſhall with anguiſh of Spirit ſay within themſelves,* (as it is elegantly expreſſed in the Book of *Wiſdom*; ch. v. 4; *We* Fools *accounted his Life Madneſs, and his End to be without Honour; How is he numbred among the children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints!*

LI.

2dly, As to thoſe who cannot argue themſelves into Infidelity, but *believe* the Certainty of a Future State and of a Judgment to come; and yet live viciouſly, and continue Impenitent, upon a *general, looſe,* and *inconſiderate* expectation, that Sin is leſs *dangerous,* and God more *merciful,* than the Preachers of the Goſpel repreſent him: The Folly of making a Mock at Sin in *This* Senſe, and upon *This* Ground; (which is indeed nothing elſe, but reſolving to *neglect* a *mortal Diſeaſe* as of *no Danger,* and to ſhut *one's Eyes* upon the Mouth of *Deſtruction*:) The *Folly* of *This,* I ſay, is well reproved by the Author of the Book of *Ecclus*; ch. xxi. 2; *My Son,* ——*flee from Sin as from the Face of a Serpent; for* ——*the Teeth thereof are as the Teeth of a Lion, ſlaying the Souls of Men, and, All iniquity is as a two-edged ſword, the wounds whereof cannot be healed.* To imagine that God will be pleaſed with an empty Form of Godlineſs, and accept a *Zeal* for *mere* Names *and Diſtinctions of Religion,* without true *Virtue and Holineſs* of Life, is, to be ſo fooliſh as to think *God* more eaſily deceived, even than mortal *Men*; and that the *Searcher of Hearts* will be impoſed upon with an outward *Profeſſion* of Service, which even an *Earthly Superiour* would with indignation reject. *Little children,* ſaith St. *John, let no man deceive you: He that* Doth *righteouſneſs, is righteous.* The Vain Hope of thoſe who rely on any Other Foundation, is affectionately deſcribed in the 5th chapter of the Book of *Wiſdom*; ver. 14; *The Hope of the Ungodly, is like Duſt that is blown away with the Wind; like a thin Froth, that is driven away with the Storm; like as the Smoke which is diſperſed here and there with a Tempeſt; and paſſeth away as the Remembrance of a Gueſt, that tarrieth but a day: But the Righteous live for evermore; their Reward alſo is with the Lord, and the Care of them is with the moſt High.*

3dly and *laſtly;* As to thoſe who are truly ſenſible of the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of a Virtuous life, and yet *at the preſent* ſpeak Peace to themſelves in the Practice of Unrighteouſneſs, and in the Enjoyment of Unlawful Pleaſures, upon an Intention of Repenting and Amending *hereafter*: The *Folly* of making a mock at Sin in *This* ſenſe, is the *Folly* of playing *with Death,* and ſporting *with Deſtruction*: It is the *Folly* of letting ſlip opportunities, which poſſibly, nay, very probably, may never be retrieved: It is the *Folly* of provoking God to cut us off in his Wrath, and to aſſign us our Portion among Hypocrites and Unbelievers. To conclude; It is the *Folly of incapacitating* a man's ſelf *more and more* for the doing of That, which yet is of abſolute Neceſſity not to be left undone. For except we do effectually repent and amend, and That ſpeedily too, ſo as to bring forth the Fruits of Virtue and Righteouſneſs, we muſt inevitably periſh: And yet the longer any man continues in Sin, the more difficult it becomes for him to leave it off. For he grows *hardened* at length through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin; and by being long *accuſtomed to do Evil,* it becomes in a manner (figuratively and comparatively ſpeaking) as difficult for him

to

SERM. LI. to *learn to do well*, as for the *Ethiopian to change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots.* The Prophet *Jeremy* moſt elegantly ſets forth the *ſame* Difficulty in *another* Compariſon, wherewith I ſhall conclude; ch. xii. 5; *If thou haſt run with Footmen, and They have wearied thee, then How canſt thou contend with Horſes? And if in the Land of Peace, wherein thou truſtedſt, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the Swelling of Jordan?*

That every One of *Us*, may in Time ſet about the Practice of our Duty, before our Feet ſtumble upon the dark Mountains, and the things that belong to our Peace be hid from our Eyes; God, of his infinite mercy, grant, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON LII.

Of that Belief which is neceſſary to Baptiſm.

St. MARK xvi. 16.

He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; But he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.

THESE Words, together with the Verſe foregoing, are an *Abridgment* of our Saviour's laſt inſtructions and directions to his Diſciples, a little before his Departure from them and Aſcenſion into Heaven: *He ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; But he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* And that they are nothing more than ſuch a brief Summary or *Abridgment* of his Diſcourſe, is evident, both from the *whole Tenor* of the Goſpels in *general*, wherein almoſt *All* his Diſcourſes are recorded after This manner, in One more briefly, in Another more at large; and *particularly* from comparing the Account the ſeveral Goſpels give us, of *this very Particular*. SERM. LII.

For *St. Matthew* in *His* Goſpel, has left us upon record ſome *other* parts of the ſame Diſcourſe, ch. xxviii. 18, *All Power*, ſays our Lord, *is given unto me in Heaven*

SERM. LII.

Heaven and in Earth: Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World. The Words, *Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you*, ſhow that even *This* alſo, is but another ſhort Abridgment of the ſame Diſcourſe.

St. *Luke*, in *His* Goſpel, gives us a ſtill *more particular* Account, how our Lord appeared to his Diſciples in the way to *Emmaus*, and *beginning at Moſes and all the Prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himſelf*, ch. xxiv. 27. And afterwards at another Appearance before his Aſcending, ver. 45, *Then opened he their Underſtanding, that they might underſtand the Scriptures; And ſaid unto them; Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day; And that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jeruſalem; And ye are Witneſſes of theſe things.*

St. *John* adds ſeveral other Circumſtances; of his particularly convincing St. *Thomas*; of his appearing at ſeveral other times to his Apoſtles: and of his uſing the following Words to them in his laſt Inſtructions, ch. xx. 21, *As my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you;* ——— *Whoſeſoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſeſoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.* That is; whoſoever receiveth the Doctrine I ſend you to preach, for the Remiſſion of Sins, and complieth with the Terms thereof, his Sins ſhall be forgiven: Or, as the ſame Senſe is expreſſed by other Words in the Text, *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved.* But whoſoever rejecteth your Doctrine, and complieth not with the Conditions therein offered him from God; his Sins ſhall be retained, and he muſt conſequently periſh. In the Phraſe of the *Text*; *he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.*

St. *Luke*, in his Hiſtory of the *Acts*, tells us yet further, that our Lord was ſeen of his Diſciples after his Paſſion for *forty days* together, *Acts* i. 3; and that That time was ſpent in inſtructing them in *the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.*

From theſe ſeveral Paſſages compared together, 'tis evident, that St. *Mark* did not intend the Words of the Text ſhould be taken to be the *very* Words, and the *whole* of the Words, which our Saviour ſpake; but on the contrary, that they ſhould be underſtood only as an *Abridgment* of his laſt inſtructions to his Diſciples; and ſo not be taken in their bare literal Signification, but as well known by common Uſe, in a ſhort and abbreviate manner of ſpeaking, to comprehend more than they might otherwiſe ſeem at firſt ſight to expreſs. In order to underſtand therefore their full meaning, we ought to take Notice, that to the Words *Believe* and *be Baptized*, St. *Luke*, in relating our Saviour's giving theſe very ſame Inſtructions to his Apoſtles, adds *Repentance* for the Remiſſion of Sins; And St. *Matthew* adds further, Obſerving *all things whatſoever I have commanded you.* And thence it will appear, that, by *believing* and *being baptized*, St. *Mark* plainly means, *Believing, Repenting, and Obeying the Goſpel.* All which, there was no need to expreſs at length; becauſe it was perfectly well underſtood in the common Uſe and Acceptation of each of thoſe Words among Chriſtians, that the part was always ſuppoſed to be put, in a brief way of ſpeaking, for the whole; and that, whereever any *One* of theſe Words was uſed, it always ſignified the ſame as if all *Three* were expreſſed. The Reaſon whereof is plain; Becauſe in reality theſe things cannot be ſeparated from each other; To *believe* the Goſpel, without *repenting* and *obeying* it, being *not* indeed *believing* it, but only *pretending* to do ſo. And hence it is, that throughout the whole New Teſtament, *Faith* generally ſignifies, not bare abſtract Belief, but the whole Obligation of the Chriſtian Religion, including *Repentance, Fidelity, and Obedience*; juſt as *Repentance* likewiſe ſignifies, not the bare Sorrow for Sin, but the actual *forſaking* it alſo, and the effectual *reforming* our manners. *Baptiſm* alſo muſt always be underſtood to ſignify, not the bare Rite, the outward Form or Ceremony, *the waſhing away of the Filth of the Fleſh*; but *the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*: Not the being baptized with *Water* only, but the being *born of Water and of the Spirit*: Not the being baptized

tized only into the Name *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*; but the being *taught* alſo *to* obſerve *whatſoever I have commanded you*; as our Saviour adds in the very Words of Inſtitution, St. *Matt.* xxviii. 20. To *believe* therefore, and to *be baptized*; is to believe *the Goſpel*, and to enter into a *ſolemn Obligation to* obey *it*. And as, under the *Law*, to him that tranſgreſſed the Law, his *Circumciſion* (ſays the Apoſtle) *is made Uncircumciſion*; ſo under the *Goſpel*, to him that obeys not the Goſpel, his *Baptiſm* is *no Baptiſm* to any ſpiritual Purpoſe, but a mere natural Waſhing of the Body, without Fruit or Efficacy. In like manner on the other ſide, the *Unbelief* of them who in Scripture are condemned for *Not believing*, is not the bare Negative Disbelief of what men do not clearly Know, or have not ſufficient Means of coming to the Knowledge of; but always, either an obſtinate rejecting of what is diſtinctly propoſed to them, and, through the Love of Vice, refuſing to conſider what might be ſufficiently proved to them; or elſe, and indeed more uſually, it ſignifies, the Diſobedience of thoſe who hypocritically profeſs, or perhaps careleſsly fancy themſelves, to be Believers. In either of theſe Senſes, *He that believeth not*, ſaith our Saviour, *ſhall be damned*. And there was no need of adding in this ſecond Clauſe, as he had done in the firſt, any mention of *Baptiſm*: Becauſe, in the *firſt* Caſe, *Believing* is *not* ſufficient without entring into the Obligation to obey, and therefore *Both* were neceſſary to be diſtinctly mentioned; but, in the *latter* caſe, *Unbelief* implies *in courſe* the neglecting or the renouncing of Baptiſm, and therefore it was ſufficient that that alone was expreſſed. The full meaning therefore of the Words of the Text, compared with the paſſages in the *other* Goſpels, wherein the ſame Hiſtory is recorded, is This. He that believes the Doctrine of the Goſpel when preached to him, and by Baptiſm enters into an Obligation to live ſuitably to that Belief, and verifies that Obligation by his following Practice, in a Life of Virtue, Righteouſneſs and Charity; the ſame ſhall be ſaved: But he that rejects the Doctrine of the Goſpel, when duly and reaſonably propoſed to him; or pretending to embrace it, yet obeys it not; (Both which, in Scripture-phraſe, are equally ſtiled *Unbelief*;) the ſame ſhall be damned.

SERM. LII.

The general Meaning of the Words being thus briefly explained, I ſhall in the following Diſcourſe, for the more particular juſtifying the ſeveral Parts of This Explication, and for the more clearly illuſtrating ſo univerſal and important a Doctrine, endeavour to ſhow diſtinctly, 1*ſt*, What the *Thing to be believed*, or what the *Subject-matter* of that Belief is, which our Saviour here declares to be ſo neceſſary to Salvation. 2*dly*, What the *Manner* of the Belief, or what the *Nature and Extent* of that *Act* of Believing is, which is here ſo indiſpenſably required. 3*dly*, Whence it comes to paſs, that *Believing*, which in other caſes is a Matter of Indifference, of Prudence or Underſtanding only, and not of Morality; yet in the Caſe of Religion, is ſo highly eſteemed: And Theſe with regard to the *former* part of the Words; *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved*. Then with regard to the latter part of the Words; *He that believeth not, ſhall be damned*; I ſhall inquire 1*ſt*, What is the full and proper meaning of this Phraſe of *not believing*; and 2*dly*, Whence it comes to paſs, that *Unbelief* is in Scripture always ſo ſeverely cenſured, as being the greateſt of Crimes.

In the 1*ſt* place, It is a matter of the greateſt importance, to inquire *What* the *Thing to be believed*, or what the *Subject-matter* of that Belief is, which our Saviour here declares to be ſo neceſſary to Salvation. And becauſe it *is* neceſſary to every man's Salvation, to whom the Goſpel is duly preached; 'tis therefore evident at firſt Sight, that it muſt of Neceſſity be ſomething, which every man is equally capable of underſtanding. For that God ſhould make any thing neceſſary to any man's Salvation, which That man, to whom it is neceſſary, is not made capable of underſtanding and knowing; is contrary to common Senſe, and to the Nature of God the righteous Judge. The Doctrine of the Goſpel therefore, on the Belief whereof our Saviour in the Text makes *all* mens Salvation to depend; (that is, the Salvation of *all* men *to whom* that Doctrine is duly and reaſonably propoſed;) is not, cannot be, any Matter of Intricacy and Difficulty, any thing that requires Learning or Subtilty to apprehend; but 'tis a Doctrine of *Practice*, a Doctrine of *Virtue* and *Righteouſneſs*, propoſed as of Neceſſity

SERM. LII.

ceſſity to be embraced by all men alike; by the Learned and the Ignorant, by the Rich and the Poor, by the Wiſe and the Simple, by the Teacher and by the Meaneſt of Them that are taught. For ſince they All have Souls alike to be ſaved, and muſt All appear equally before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt; 'tis plain they muſt All underſtand the Rule by which they are to be judged; and That Rule muſt conſequently be level to the Capacities of them All. *Degrees* indeed of Knowledge there are; and accordingly to whom much or little is given, of him proportionably will much or little be required. But as to the main *Body* of the Rule, the great and *Fundamental* Doctrines of Religion, the things *covenanted about* at Baptiſm, the things to be known and believed as of *general* abſolute *Neceſſity* to Salvation; theſe cannot but be equally intelligible to perſons of all Capacities. And accordingly the Character the Scripture gives us of the Doctrine of the Goſpel, is This; that it is made *plain that he that runs may read it*, Hab. ii. 2. And in the Prophecy of *Jeremiah*, ch. xxxi. 33, applied by St. *Paul*, *Heb.* viii. 11, *I will put my laws into their mind, ſaith the Lord, and write them in their Hearts;* —— *and they ſhall not teach every man his Neighbour, and every man his Brother, ſaying, Know the Lord; For all ſhall know me from the leaſt to the greateſt.* And again, *Deut.* xxx. 11, expreſly applied by the Apoſtle to the Doctrine of Chriſt, *Rom.* x. 6, *The commandment which I command thee This day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off; it is not in Heaven, that thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Who ſhall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Who ſhall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the Word is very nigh unto thee,* even *in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayeſt do it.* And here, 'tis very obvious to ask; if the Doctrine, of which our Saviour declares, that *he who believes and is baptized* into it, *ſhall be ſaved*, be ſo very plain, and nigh unto us; *Where* then is it *expreſly* and *explicitly* to be found? and *what* is it, that every ſincere, every well-diſpoſed perſon, may ſo eaſily underſtand; and, by embracing and being guided by it, be undoubtedly ſaved? I anſwer: 'Tis as to its ultimate and moſt eſſential parts implanted in our very Nature and Reaſon. 'Tis more diſtinctly and authoritatively delivered to us in the Diſcourſes of our Saviour, and in the Writings of the Apoſtles; and repeated over and over again, and inculcated perpetually throughout the whole Scripture. The Sermons of our Saviour himſelf in the Goſpels, are ſo plain and intelligible, that hardly any well-diſpoſed perſon *can* miſunderſtand them. In the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles, the plain and univerſal neceſſary Doctrines, are intermixed indeed with particular and more difficult determinations of certain points of Controverſy, peculiarly neceſſary and well-known in Thoſe Times; uſeful and inſtructive at *all* times to All that have Capacities and Abilities to conſider the ſeveral Occaſions of their being written; but not abſolutely and indiſpenſably needful to be exactly underſtood by every ſingle Chriſtian for his own Salvation. The Primitive Church therefore, uſed to ſelect out of Theſe, the univerſally neceſſary and Fundamental Doctrines, wherein to inſtruct All perſons, who, by believing and being baptized, were deſirous to ſecure to themſelves the Promiſe in the Text, that, by ſo doing, they ſhould be ſaved. In which Matter, that the Authority of the Doctrines revealed immediately from God, might be diminiſhed as little as poſſible by any mixture of human Fallibility; they kept as near as could be, to the very Words themſelves, the undoubted and indiſputable Words of Scripture. And the Sum of the Doctrines ſo expreſſed, as of Neceſſity to be believed by All to whom they were preached, was after This or the like manner. That there is One God, the Father and Lord of All things, the Maker of Heaven and Earth; the Preſerver, Governor, and Judge of All; who is above All, and through All, and in us All. That by the Sins and Impieties of Men, this Supreme Governor of the World, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, was juſtly offended; and They conſequently, become the Objects of his Anger and Diſpleaſure. That yet compaſſionating the Frailty of our Nature, he reſolved to have Mercy upon ſinful Man, in ſuch a manner, as not to give countenance or incou-

ragement

ragement to Sin; and accordingly ſent forth his own Son, the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the Expreſs Image of his Perſon, both to condemn Sin in the Fleſh, and at the ſame time to obtain pardon for it, by the ſhedding of his own blood. That, to this end, the Son of God freely and willingly left the boſom of his Father, was incarnate and made in the likeneſs of Man, became ſubject to all the infirmities and weakneſſes of our Nature; lived therein holily and purely, without ſpot of Sin; preached and declared the Will of his Father to Mankind; ſet an Example of all Virtue, Righteouſneſs and Patience in his Converſation; gave himſelf up into the Hands of Wicked Men, to be crucified and ſlain for our Sins; roſe again the third day from the Dead; aſcended up into Heaven, and ſat down on the right Hand of the Throne of God; and ſent forth his Holy Spirit, (the ſame Spirit of God, which ſpake of old by the Prophets,) to inſpire his Apoſtles in like manner, and inable them with Power and Authority to preach Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins in his Name, to all Nations. That by the ſame Spirit, he now governs and ſanctifies his Church, and will continue to do ſo unto the End of the World. At which Time he ſhall come again in the glory of his Father, and raiſe the whole World from the Dead, and ſhall judge every One according to his Works. The Devil, and all thoſe Angels which followed him in his firſt Tranſgreſſion; and all wicked Men, who have ſuffered themſelves to be ſeduced by him; the impious and the profane, the unrighteous and unjuſt, the unholy and the impure; theſe he ſhall condemn to be caſt into the Furnace of Fire; where they ſhall every one be puniſhed with exact Juſtice according to their ſeveral Deſerts. But All holy and good Men, who under the ſeveral Diſpenſations of God's true Religion in all Ages and in all Nations from the beginning of the World, either in Obedience to the Light of Nature, with *Enoch* and *Noah* and *Job* and the Patriarchs; or under the Law, with *Moſes* and the Prophets; or under the Goſpel, after the Example of the Apoſtles and Diſciples of our Lord, have in Piety and Devotion, in Righteouſneſs, Equity and Charity, in Holineſs and Purity of Life, ſerved God and kept his Commandments, either from the beginning of their Lives, or from the time of their forſaking their Sins by Repentance; theſe he ſhall reward with everlaſting and inexpreſſible Happineſs, each in their ſeveral Degree, in the eternal Kingdom of his Father; in that general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born, where the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, together with the innumerable company of Angels, and with Jeſus the Mediator and great High-Prieſt of the New Covenant, ſhall ſtand continually in the preſence of God the Judge of All, and ſhall ſerve him before his Throne for ever. This is that Form of Sound Words, that Summary of neceſſary Truth, which the Apoſtle exhorts all men to hold faſt. This is that univerſal Doctrine, in the Profeſſion of which conſiſts the Unity of the Catholick Church of Chriſt under all Differences of external Forms, and under all Variety of Opinions in other and leſs important matters, in all Ages and thorough all Nations over the Face of the whole Earth. This is that Doctrine, which whoſoever ſincerely believes, and verifies that belief by a ſuitable Practice, ſhall be ſaved. *Other* Doctrines there are, delivered in Scripture, uſeful *for reproof*, *for correction*, *for inſtruction* in many particular Caſes; but not indiſpenſably neceſſary to be underſtood by every man. And ſtill other Doctrines there are, and Explications of Doctrines, delivered by the Authority of *Men*; ſometimes profitable indeed and helpful for the underſtanding of Scripture, but more frequently occaſioning nothing but vain Contentions and empty Diſputes, which hinder rather than promote mens Salvation. At leaſt *Neceſſary to Salvation*, there cannot any thing be, beſides that general Doctrine before-mentioned; which All men can as univerſally underſtand, as they are univerſally concerned to look after their own Salvation; and of which our Lord declares, that *He that believeth and is Baptized* into it, *ſhall be ſaved*.

SERM. LII.

This therefore may ſuffice concerning the 1*ſt* Particular, *viz.* What the *Thing to be believed*, or what the *Subject-Matter* of that Belief is, which our

SERM. LII.

Saviour here declares to be so necessary to Salvation. 2*dly*, I am to consider in the next place, what the *Manner* of the Belief, or what the *Nature and Extent* of that *Act* of Believing is, which is here so indispensably required. And to Him that seriously considers the Scriptures upon this Head, it will plainly appear, that therein is always intended such a firm and rational Perswasion, as is *founded* upon reasonable and good *grounds*, and *produces* suitable and proper *Effects*. There have been some so unreasonable, as, from these Words of our Saviour. *He that believeth shall be saved*; and from other passages of Scripture, wherein men are
Acts xvi. 31. said to be *justified by Faith*; and, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*; to conclude that *mere Credulity*, how *inconsiderate* soever, and how *little effect* soever it has upon their lives, will entitle them to Salvation. But tho' in a short and concise manner of speaking, the Part is indeed sometimes thus put for the Whole, yet very often the Whole is fully expressed; and, where it is not, yet Reason and the general Tenor of Scripture shows, that it is always understood. I say therefore, that to *Believe*, constantly implies these two Things. 1*st*, a Firm Persuasion, *founded* upon reasonable and good *grounds*. And This in opposition to such a careless Credulity, as, like a Foundation in the Sand, quickly suffers whatever is built upon it to fall to the Ground. *The Simple believeth every word, but the prudent man looketh well to his going*, Prov. xiv. 15. The *Bereans* are commended, *Acts* xvii. 11, for *searching the Scriptures* of the Old Testament *daily, whether the things* taught them by the Apostles *were so or not:* (Far from That Popish Notion, of believing at a venture as the Church believes; they are commended, for not having an implicit Faith even in the *Apostles* themselves, but *searching the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*) And St. *Thomas*'s careful and inquisitive Faith, was by our Saviour himself thought fit to be confirmed in the following singular and most affectionate manner, *St. Joh.* xx. 27. *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.* He does indeed, in the next Words, pronounce *Them still More* blessed, *who have not seen, and yet have believed.* But his meaning therein, is not to recommend a careless and inconsiderate Credulity, which he elsewhere compares to Corn sown upon a Rock, which springs up indeed suddenly, but soon withers for want of Root; but his Design on the contrary, is highly to commend the Diligence of those, who, having not the opportunity which St. *Thomas* had; and considering, that *Faith* is most properly the *Substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen*; and that *Hope that is seen, is not*
Heb. xi. 1. *Hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?* his Design, I say, is to commend
Rom. viii. 24. the Diligence of those, who *hoping for that they see not, do with Patience wait for it*, Rom. viii. 25; who beholding *the Promises afar off*, and *being persuaded of them, endure* with *Moses*, (Heb. xi. 13, 27,) *as* seeing *him which is invisible*; in a word, who, by *inquiring and searching diligently*, (as St. *Peter* expresses it, 1 *Pet.* i. 8,) attain to a satisfactory and rational conviction of the Truth of the Doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; *whom, having not seen*, they *love*; *in whom, though now* they *see him not, yet believing* they *rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of Glory.* They consider, the Purity and Excellency of the Doctrine itself, and its agreeableness to Reason, and to the Nature and Attributes of God: They ponder the Evidence of the Miracles he worked; which, though they behold not Themselves, yet they find attested by the greatest and most remarkable Testimony that was ever given to any Fact in the World: They examine the Prophecies which went before concerning him, and compare all the Actions of his Life with those antient Predictions; *Searching what* Things, and *what manner of Time the Spirit of Christ which was in* the Prophets *did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*, 1 Pet. i. 11. They consider also the Prophecies that He himself delivered, and his Apostles after him; and compare them with the whole Series of Events, and general Dispensations of Providence through all the Ages of the World. And by these means they work in themselves a Firm Persuasion, *founded* upon reasonable and good *grounds*; which is the 1*st* thing, that I said *Believing*, in the Scripture-sense, constantly implies. The 2*d* is, that it be such a Perswasion of Mind, as *produces*

suitable

ſuitable and proper *Effects*: He *that believeth, and is baptized.* But This, together with the Reaſons, why *Believing*, in this caſe, is ſo highly eſteemed and rewarded; *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved*; and the conſideration of its contrary, *Unbelief*; and the reaſons why That is declared ſo criminal and ſo ſeverely condemned; *He that believeth not, ſhall be damned*; muſt be referred to a farther Opportunity. SERM. LII.

SERMON

SERMON LIII.

Of that Belief which is neceſſary to Baptiſm.

St. MARK xvi. 16.

He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; But he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.

SERM. LIII.

IN a Former Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I propoſed to conſider, 1*ſt*, What the *Thing to be believed*, or what the *Subject-matter* of that Belief is, which our Saviour here declares to be ſo neceſſary to Salvation. 2*dly*, What the *Manner* of the Belief, or what the *Nature and Extent* of that *Act* of Believing is, which is here ſo indiſpenſably required. 3*dly*, Whence it comes to paſs, that *Believing* which in other caſes is a Matter of Indifference, of Prudence or Underſtanding only, and not of Morality; yet in the Caſe of Religion, is ſo highly eſteemed. And Theſe with regard to the 1*ſt* part of the Words; *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall* be ſaved. Then with Regard to the Latter part of the Words, *he that believeth not, ſhall be damned*; 1*ſt*, What is the full and proper meaning of this

this Phraſe of *not believing*; and 2*dly*, Whence it comes to paſs, that *Unbe-*SERM. *lief* is in Scripture always ſo ſeverely cenſured, as being the greateſt of LIII. Crimes. In the 1*ſt* place, What the *Thing to be believed*, or what the *Subject-Matter* of that Belief is, which our Saviour here declares to be ſo neceſſary to Salvation, I have already explained. 2*dly*, As to the *Manner* of the Belief, or what the *Nature and Extent* of that *Act* of Believing is, which is here ſo indiſpenſably required; I obſerved that, in Scripture-ſenſe, it always imports ſuch a firm and rational Perſwaſion of Mind, as is *founded* upon reaſonable and good *grounds*, and *produces* ſuitable and proper *Effects*. The Explication of the former part of this Propoſition, I have already gone through; *viz.* that *Belief*, in Scripture-ſenſe, always imports ſuch a firm and rational Perſuaſion of Mind, as is *founded* upon reaſonable and good *grounds*. It remains that I proceed at this Time, to ſhow that it alſo conſtantly ſignifies ſuch a Perſuaſion, as *produces* ſuitable and proper *Effects*.

And This is evident in the firſt place, from the very *Nature* and *Reaſon* of the Thing. For, as the Shadow or Image of a Man, is not the Man himſelf; nor a dead Corpſe, the Perſon, whoſe Body only it is: And, in all other Caſes, Things are valued only by their Power and Efficacy; and are what they are, not by the mere denomination or external Appearance, but by their real Nature and inward Virtues or Qualities: So *Faith*, is not a bare empty Aſſent to the Truth of the Goſpel, a Means conſidered ſeparate from its intended End; but 'tis ſuch an *Effectual* Aſſent of the *Underſtanding*, as by a regular Operation influences and determines the *Will*, and thereby governs the Man's *Life and Actions*; ſhewing forth itſelf in the Fruits of true Virtue. And He of whom our Saviour declares in the Text, that he *ſhall be ſaved* becauſe *he believeth*; is not he who propoſes to believe, what in his Actions he has no regard to; but he who by the Fruit and Effects of a Chriſtian and Good Life, ſhews that he really has within himſelf That Faith, which is the Root, the Spring, and the Cauſe of ſuch Actions.

All which, as it is evident from the *Nature* and *Reaſon* of the thing itſelf, ſo it is farther apparent from our Saviour's adding thoſe Words, *And is baptized. He that believeth, and* is baptized; That is, which believeth the Goſpel, and entreth into a ſolemn Obligation to obey it, and verifies That Obligation by a ſuitable Practice in the following Courſe of his Life; He *ſhall be ſaved*. For ſo the Apoſtle expreſly explains it; that the *Baptiſm* which *ſaves us*, is *not the putting away the Filth of the Fleſh, but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And our Saviour himſelf paraphraſeth his own Command, (*baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*,) by the Words immediately following; *Matt.* xxviii. 20, *Teaching them to* Obſerve *all things whatſoever I have commanded you*. And in his Diſcourſe with *Nicodemus*, St. *Joh.* iii. 5, *Except a man be born*, ſaith he, *of Water and of the* Spirit, *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. The Baptiſm of Water, is but the Sign or Emblem; the Baptiſm of the *Spirit*, is the reality or thing ſignified. And what *That* means, *viz.* the being *Baptized* or *Born* of the *Spirit*, the Apoſtle tells us, 2 *Th.* ii. 13, *God has from the beginning choſen you to ſalvation, through* Sanctification *of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth*. What our Saviour, in the words of the Text, calls *believing* and being *baptized*; and in St. *John*'s Goſpel, being *baptized with Water and the Spirit*; St. *Paul* here ſtiles *Belief of the Truth*, and Sanctification *of the Spirit*. And what *That* Sanctification is, he explains ſtill more diſtinctly, 1 *Cor.* vi. 11, *Know ye not, that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God? —— And ſuch were ſome of you; But ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by the Spirit of our God*. Hence Baptiſm is called, *the Baptiſm of* Repentance *for the Remiſſion of Sins*; And Baptized perſons who anſwer their Profeſſion, are ſaid to have *waſhed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb*. The literal meaning of which figurative expreſſion, is thus ſet down by the Pro- Rev. vii. 14.

SERM. LIII.

phet; *Iſ.* i. 16, *Waſh you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well;* —— Then *though your Sins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool.* Now, as the Scripture thus fully explains *This* part of our Saviour's Words, *he that is Baptized*, to ſignify a man's entring into a ſolemn Obligation to obey the Goſpel, and his verifying That Obligation by a ſuitable Practice; ſo does it, in numberleſs places, as clearly explain thoſe *other* Words alſo, *he that Believeth*, to ſignify always ſuch a Perſuaſion of Mind, as ſtops not without producing its proper *Effects*. What is here called *Believing*, is elſewhere expreſſed more diſtinctly, Repent *ye, and believe the Goſpel*, St. *Mar.* i. 15. In another place, 'tis ſtiled *believing with the* Heart *unto Righteouſneſs, and with the* Mouth *making confeſſion unto Salvation*, Rom. x. 10. In other places, 'tis called believing and perſevering; Heb. x. 39, *We are not of them who* draw back *unto perdition, but of them that* believe *to the ſaving of the Soul*; where *believing* being oppoſed to *drawing back*, muſt of neceſſity ſignify That *Perſeverance* which is the effect of True Faith. And 1 *Cor.* xv. 2, *By which ye are ſaved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unleſs ye have believed in vain.* In the ſixth chapter of St. *John*'s Goſpel, what our Saviour ſays, ver. 40 and 47, *He that* believeth *on me, hath everlaſting life*; is at the 54th verſe repeated in another form of Expreſſion, *Whoſo* eateth my fleſh and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal Life*: That is; He who in a conſtant Imitation of me and Obedience to my Commands, continues united to me by a Vital Participation, as Members of the Body with their Head; *he* has the promiſe of eternal Life remaining in him. In *other* paſſages of Scripture, what is meant by *believing*, ſufficiently appears from the parallel Expreſſions, by which it is deſcribed. *Acts* vi. 7, 'tis being obedient *to the Faith*; and again, *Rom.* i. 5, *the* Obedience *of Faith*. Ch. ix. 30, 'tis called *the* Righteouſneſs *of Faith*; and *Phil.* iii. 9, *the* righteouſneſs *which is of* God *by Faith*. 1 *Tim.* i. 19, 'tis *Faith and a good Conſcience*; and ch. iii. 9, *Faith in a* pure *conſcience*. *Gal.* v. 6, 'tis *Faith which worketh by Love*; and *Tit.* iii. 8, *They which have believed in God, muſt be careful to maintain* good Works. In theſe and numberleſs other the like places, ſufficient Care is taken to ſatisfy all reaſonable Perſons, that *Belief* is in the Goſpel always valued, not by its *Denomination*, but by its *Effects*. And yet, to prevent all Poſſibility of Miſtake in a matter of ſuch extreme importance, there is ſtill a clearer and more expreſs way of ſpeaking, for explication of this Doctrine, made uſe of by St. *James*, ch. ii. of his Epiſtle; where he tells us, that *Faith without Works* can no more *ſave* a man, than good Words without Deeds can feed the Hungry, or cloath the Naked, ver. 14, 15; that even the *Devils* themſelves *believe*, and tremble, ver. 19; that *Abraham our Father* was *juſtified by Works*, or (which is the ſame thing) was *therefore* juſtified *by* Faith, becauſe *by Works was his Faith made perfect*, ver. 21, 22; that, *as the Body without the Spirit is dead, ſo Faith without Works is dead alſo*, ver. 26. And by our Saviour himſelf, St. *Matt.* vii. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that* Doth *the Will of my Father which is in Heaven*; and ver. 26, he *that heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and* doth them not, *ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh man, that built his Houſe upon the Sand.* From which clear and deciſive Expreſſions it appears moſt evidently, that when St. *Paul* ſays *we are juſtified by Faith without the deeds of the Law*, he muſt be underſtood to mean by Faith, not a *bare ſpeculative Belief*, but ſuch *Belief and Moral Obedience* to the Commands of the *Goſpel*, as are oppoſed to the *ceremonial Works* of the *Moſaic Law*: And that, when 'tis ſaid, *Acts* xiii. 39, that, *by Chriſt, All who* believe, *are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes*; it muſt be underſtood, All who *ſo* believe, as to *repent* and *forſake* thoſe Sins, *from* which they hope to be juſtified *by* that Faith. And that when 'tis ſaid, *Acts* xv. 9, that God *purified* the *hearts* of the Gentiles, *by Faith*; it muſt needs be underſtood of *ſuch* a Faith, as St. *Peter* deſcribes in his Firſt Epiſtle, ch. i. 21, 22, when he ſays, *you who by* Chriſt *do* believe *in God*, —— *have purified your ſouls in* obeying *the Truth*. All which explications of the Word, *Believing*, are further confirmed, by the like Uſe of *other* Phraſes in Scripture, where

Rom. x. 6.

where *Other* ſingle Virtues, as *Hope*, *Love*, *Fear*, the *Knowledge of God*, and *calling upon the Name of the Lord*, are by a like Figure put for the whole of Religion: As they are plainly declared to be, either by the *Manner of Expreſſion* itſelf in the places where they are mentioned, or by *diſtinct Explication* in other paſſages. *Hope*, when it is uſed to ſignify a *Virtue*, can for That only Reaſon be ſuppoſed to be ſo, becauſe the Ground or Foundation on which it is built, is the *having obeyed* the Commandments of God. *Fear*, in like manner, when it is not a Paſſion, but a *Virtue*, evidently ſignifies ſuch a filial or reverential Fear, as is the ſame with Obedience. Our *Love* of God, is by our Saviour himſelf diſtinctly defined, St. *Joh.* xiv. 21, *He that hath my* Commandments *and* keepeth *them, he it is that* loveth *me*; and by the Apoſtle, 1 *Joh.* v. 3, *This is the* Love *of God, that we* keep *his* Commandments. In like manner, the *Knowledge of God*, 1 Joh. ii. 3, 4; *Hereby we know that we* know *him, if we* keep *his* Commandments. *He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.* And what is affirmed, *Acts* ii. 21, that *whoſoever ſhall* call *on the Name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved*; is by our Saviour fully explained in the place before-cited, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that* Doth *the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* By the ſame Analogy therefore, *Belief* alſo muſt always be underſtood to ſignify, not barely an empty Aſſent, but ſuch a Conviction of the Underſtanding, as fails not to operate by a ſuitable Obedience of the Will and Actions. SERM. LIII. and ver. 15, 23.

And This may ſuffice for Explication of the *ſecond* particular in the Text, What the *Manner* of the Belief, or what the *Nature* and *Extent* of that *Act* of Believing is, which is here ſo indiſpenſably required; namely, that it is ſuch a firm and rational Perſuaſion of Mind, as is *founded* upon reaſonable and good *grounds*, and produces ſuitable and proper *Effects*.

The 3*d* Particular to be conſidered, was, whence it comes to paſs, that *Believing*, which in other caſes is a Matter of Indifference, of Prudence or Underſtanding only, and not of Morality; yet in the caſe of Religion is ſo highly eſteemed; *He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved.* And the Reaſons are;

1*ſt*, Becauſe, in practical Matters, it is an Act, not of the *Underſtanding* only, but partly of the *Will* alſo, to attend and be willing to ſubmit to reaſonable Evidence; to lay aſide the Prejudices of Luſts and Paſſions; to ſuffer Reaſon and Argument to prevail over worldly Intereſts; and to embrace a Doctrine of Truth and Right, merely upon the Evidence of its being ſuch, without regard to temporal Conſiderations. *Believing*, in matters of ſtrict Demonſtration, is an Act, not of Choice, but of Neceſſity. In Queſtions of uncertain Speculation, 'tis a thing merely indifferent, neither good nor evil, or, at moſt, a part of Prudence or Imprudence only. But in matters of Practice, to Believe and be guided by Reaſon and Evidence, not by Inclination and Paſſion; as 'tis the moſt proper and natural, ſo 'tis one of the moſt commendable and excellent Actions of a rational Being. Hence in Scripture, the ſingular Commendation given the *Bereans*, *Acts* xvii. 11. is founded upon This, that *they ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo or not.* And the high Encomium beſtowed upon *Abraham*'s Faith is upon this ground, *Heb.* xi. 19, that he *Accounted*, (the word in the original is, he *Reaſoned within himſelf*, and was *ſatisfied*,) *that God was able to raiſe up* his Son Iſaac *again, even from the Dead*: And our Saviour's Approbation of the *Canaaniti*ſh Woman, *O Woman, great is thy Faith*, Mat. xv. 28, was occaſioned by her arguing reaſonably, that as *even the dogs eat of the Crumbs that fall from the childrens table*, ſo ſhe, though an Alien from the Commonwealth of *Iſrael*, yet might hope for ſome ſmall portion of Bleſſing from the Meſſiah, who was ſent into the World by the common creator of All men. And the extraordinary Character he gives the *Centurion*; *I have not found ſo great Faith, no, not in Iſrael*, Matt. viii. 10, was upon This account, that he *reaſoned himſelf* into a Belief of Jeſus's power to heal Diſeaſes at a *Diſtance*, by conſidering that even *he himſelf* alſo, though a Perſon infinitely inferior to our Lord, yet had *Servants* under him, ſo that he needed not to go in his own Perſon, but could *ſay to This man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh.* The particular Commendation given to theſe Perſons Faith, was, that it was not a raſh Credulity, but a reaſonable, conſiderate, and well-grounded Belief. And accordingly the Scripture, in other places, directs

us

SERM. LIII.

us to try *the Spirits, whether they are of God*, 1 Joh. iv. 1; and exhorts us to *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks* us *a* reason *of the hope that is in* us, 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. And *the Sluggard* on the contrary, who *considers* nothing carefully, is justly reproved for being *wiser in his own Conceit, than seven men that can render a* Reason, *Prov.* xxvi. 16. *God himself*, in his Dealings with mankind, appeals to them by
Is. xlvi. 8. the Prophet, to *consider* and *shew themselves men*: Mic. vi. 2, *The Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will* plead *with Israel*: And, *Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord*, Is. i. 18, He expects of them, a *reasonable service*, founded upon a just and *reasonable Belief*; and Both these, are the proper and most commendable Acts of *reasonable Creatures*.

2*dly*, Another reason, why Faith is in Scripture always so highly commended, is because, in the Scripture-Sense of the Word, it is always supposed to *arise* and *begin* from a Willingness of knowing and being informed in the Will of God, and *ends* in actual Obedience to his Commands so made known. Which being both the *Foundation* and the highest *Improvement* of Virtue, 'tis no wonder if upon *That Part*, which by way of eminence is frequently put for the *Whole*, so great Commendations are bestowed in Scripture. 2 Chr. xx. 20. *Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; Believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.* The meaning is, *Observe* and *obey* them; obey the commandments, which *They* deliver you from God; (in like manner as our Saviour in the Text, *Believe and be baptized*, and verify that Obligation in the Sense before-explained;) So shall ye be Partakers of the Promise annext.

And This, concerning the *former* part of the Words, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.* In the *latter* part of the Words, *He that believeth not, shall be damned*; it is to be considered, 1*st*, What is the full and proper meaning of this Phrase of *not believing*; and 2*dly*, Whence it comes to pass, that *Unbelief* is in Scripture always so severely censured, as being the greatest of Crimes.

The latter of these will be cleared by the Explication of the former, *viz.* what is the full and proper meaning of this Phrase of *not believing*.

And This is indeed a very great and important Inquiry; because there is no Sin, against which severer Judgments are denounced in Scripture, than against *Unbelief*. Among those who are to have their part in a Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone, the *unbelieving* are placed in the first Rank, *Rev.* xxi. 8. The *fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers*, and so on. And when our Saviour expresses his highest indignation against that evil Servant, who began to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink and be drunken; as if he had nothing *more severe* to terrify him withal, he threatens to *cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with* Unbelievers, as with the worst of Offenders; St. *Luk.* xii. 46. 'Tis evident therefore, that by *Unbelief*, in this and other places of Scripture, cannot be meant that bare negative *want of Belief*, which, with regard to the Whole *Gospel*, is the case of all those to whom it never was preached; and, with regard to any particular *Doctrine whatsoever*, is the Case of those to whom that Doctrine was never clearly made known and reasonably explained. For, *not to believe* what a Man has not *good and sufficient* Reason to believe, can never be so much as any Crime at all. And *the Judge of all the Earth will do what is right*, and *with Equity will he judge the Nations*. And, *to whom little is given, of him will not be much required*. And St. *Paul* expressly declares, that *when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves*; and that their *uncircumcision shall be counted for circumcision*, Rom. ii. 14, 26: So that tho' there is indeed *no other Name given under Heaven, by which we must be saved*, but that of *Christ* only; yet by that very Name may those possibly have Benefit, who never had any explicit Knowledge of him. But by *Unbelief* therefore in Scripture, is always meant one of the two following things; Either 1*st*, in *general*, such an obstinate Rejecting of the Whole Gospel and of the gracious Terms thereof, as arises from a vitious and wilful refusing to attend to and examine the Evidence of it; Or 2*dly* such a Disbelief of the *Particulars* of God's Promises, in those who profess to imbrace the *Whole*, as hinders them from *obeying* the Doctrine, which they would seem to receive. The *first was* the Case of the Pharisees, in our Saviour's time; and *is Now* the Case of all vitious Infidels in Christian Countries,

tries, who refuſe to examine and conſider the Reaſonableneſs of the uncorrupted Doctrine of the Goſpel, as delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, ſeparate from the uncertain Doctrines and Comments of *Men*. The *latter*, *was* the Caſe of the Jews of old, who in the Wilderneſs were ſo often charged with *Unbelief*; and *Now is* the Caſe of all profeſſed Chriſtians, whoſe Works do not prove their Faith to be real. SERM. LIII.

As to thoſe who *wholly* reject the Goſpel, when duly and reaſonably preach'd to them; That the *Unbelief* They are charged with in Scripture, is always a vitious Refuſing to examine; appears from all the Texts, wherein ſuch Unbelief is mentioned. For ſo our Saviour, when he had declared to *Nicodemus*, that *he who believeth not in the Name of the only begotten Son of God, is condemned already*; immediately explains it by adding, *And this is the Condemnation, that* Light *is come into the World, and men* loved darkneſs *rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were evil*, St. Joh. iii. 18. And again, ch. xii. 46. *I am come*, ſaith he, *a* Light *into the World, that whoſoever believeth on me, ſhould not abide in Darkneſs*; *And if any man hear my Words, and believe not, I judge him not*; — *the* Word *that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him in the laſt day*. And ch. xv. 24. *If I had not done among them the Works that none other man did, they had not had Sin*; *but now they have both ſeen and hated, both me and my Father*. And the ſame thing is expreſſed in thoſe other places of Scripture, where men are ſaid therefore *to caſt God's words behind them*, becauſe *they hate to be reformed*; and that they *believe not the Truth*, becauſe *they have* pleaſure *in unrighteouſneſs*, 2 Th. ii. 12. Job xxiv. 13. Joh. x. 37.

And hence it is, that the Word, *not believing*, comes in the *ſecondary* Senſe to be uſed frequently, not only for Rejecting the *Whole* Goſpel, but alſo to ſignify ſuch a partial Disbelief of the *Particulars* of God's Promiſes, in thoſe who profeſs to embrace the *Whole*, as hinders them from *obeying* the Doctrine, which they would ſeem to receive. So that in Scripture nothing is more common, than in like manner as *He* is ſtiled *Fool*, who *acts* not according to what he *knows and underſtands*; ſo to call Him *Unbeliever*, who *practiſes not* what he profeſſes to believe. What our Saviour threatens, St. *Luk.* xii. 46. *ſhall appoint him his portion with the* Unbelievers, is in St. *Matt.* thus expreſſed, ch. xxiv. 51. *ſhall appoint him his portion with the* hypocrites. In like manner, *Eph.* v. 6. What in the *margin* is tranſlated, *cometh the Wrath of God upon the children of* Unbelief, is in the *Text* itſelf, *the children of* Diſobedience. The Jews in the Wilderneſs, tho' they could not poſſibly disbelieve what they ſaw with their own Eyes, yet for their Diſobedience they are in Scripture called *Unbelievers*: Jude 5. *The Lord having ſaved the People out of the land of Egypt, afterwards deſtroyed them that* believed not. And *Heb.* iii. 19. *We ſee they could not enter in, becauſe of* Unbelief; And ver. 18. *To whom ſware he, that they ſhould not enter into his Reſt, but to them that* believed not? That is, as 'tis explained in the *verſe* before; *them that had* ſinned. Again, ch. iv. 6. They *entred not in, becauſe of* Unbelief; i. e. of *Diſobedience*. And the ſame Phraſe is uſed concerning their Poſterity in the days of *Hoſhea*, 2 Kings xvii. 14. *They would not hear*, i. e. would not obey; *but hardened their neck, like to the neck of the Fathers, who did not* believe *in the Lord their God*. And the Apoſtle applies it in the ſame Senſe to Us Chriſtians, *Heb.* iv. 11. *Let* Us *labour therefore to enter into that Reſt, leſt any man fall after the ſame example of* Unbelief; in the margin it is, after the ſame example of *Diſobedience*. And ch. iii. 12. *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of* You *an evil Heart of* Unbelief *in departing from the living God*; i. e. as he explains it in the following verſe, in being *hardned* (as *The* Others were) *thro' the Deceitfulneſs of Sin*.

And now, the Nature of *Unbelief* being thus explained, it thence ſufficiently appears (which was the *Laſt* thing propoſed) how it comes to paſs, that *not believing* is always in Scripture ſo ſeverely cenſured, as being the greateſt of Crimes. For, the Doctrine of Chriſt being extremely reaſonable in itſelf, (the Doctrine of Chriſt, I ſay, as delivered in Scripture in its original Simplicity, and ſeparate from the uncertain additional Doctrines and Comments of *Men*,) *This* doctrine being extremely *reaſonable in itſelf*, and being *proved* moreover by the ſtrongeſt *Evidence* in the World; All thoſe to whom That *Evidence* is fairly propoſed, and the *Reaſonableneſs* of the Doctrine truly repreſented, if they obſtinately reject it, and the gracious Terms thereof; they plainly do deſpite to the Spirit of God; And their Love

SERM. LIII.

of Vice being the only Cause of their *Unbelief*, 'tis consequently of the same Nature, and accordingly called in Scripture promiscuously by the same Name, with the *Disobedience* of Believers. And therefore they are joined together, as in their Crime, so in their Punishment, they that know *not God*, and they that obey *not the Gospel*. And 'tis very reasonable, that as *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*; so he that *believeth not*, in the Sense which has been Now explained, *should* on the contrary *be damned*.

That which remains is, by way of Inference, 1*st*, to exhort those who call themselves *Deists*, or Followers of *natural* Religion only, without regard to the Gospel, to consider seriously what it is they reject; and when they have separated the undisputed *Doctrines of Christ* from the uncertain *Opinions of contentious Men*, Then to judge, whether despising this gracious Offer of the divine Goodness, be not *rejecting the Counsel of God against themselves*, and foolishly *forsaking their own Mercies*. 2*dly*, To exhort all those who profess themselves *Christians*, above all things to live *worthy of* their *holy profession*; to *let their light shine before men, that others seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven*; at least, to *give no Offence to Them that are without*, lest *thro'* Them *the Name of God be blasphemed among the Gentiles, as it is written*, Rom. iii. 24. And *Lastly*, to exhort those who *Teach* Christianity to others, that, since hindring others from believing, is of the same guilt as not believing ourselves; therefore we be very diligent to represent the Doctrine of Christ as reasonable and plain, as he himself has represented it; desiring with *Moses*, that *All the Lord's people were Prophets*; and not imitating the Romish and Scholastick Writers, who make their own Doctrines, Traditions, and Explications of Doctrines, of the same Authority with the Word of God; and, instead of teaching all men (after the Apostle's example) to be *ready to give an Answer to every man that asketh* them a Reason *of the Hope that is in them*, persuade them on the contrary to believe so much the more implicitly and with the greater Confidence, as the things they impose on them are the more *unreasonable* and absurd to be believed. From such Follies and Impieties, which promote nothing but Scepticism and Infidelity, let *Us* turn away ourselves; Always remembring our Saviour's Admonition, that we *are the Salt of the Earth; But if the Salt itself has lost its savour, wherewith shall things be seasoned; It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghil, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.*

Num. xi. 29.

Mat. v. 13. Luk. xiv. 34. Col. iv. 5, 6.

SERMON

SERMON LIV.

The Design and End of Baptism is newness of Life.

ROM. vi. 3, 4.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life.

THE Apostle having in the foregoing chapter, with great variety of emphatical Expressions, set forth the exceeding goodness and compassion of God towards Mankind, in causing the Righteousness of the *Second Adam* to become in its consequences *more* effectual towards the *recovery and salvation of* Sinners, than the introducing of Sin into the World by the *First Adam* had been instrumental towards their *Destruction*; He in *This* chapter proceeds to answer a very great and dangerous Objection, and to prevent a most fatal Corruption and Abuse, which he foresaw would arise in ill minds upon the Doctrine

SERM. LIV.

Doctrine he preached; and which in Fact, to great Numbers of those who call themselves Christians, has caused the Gospel itself, instead of being *the Savour of Life unto Life*, to become on the contrary the *Savour of Death unto Death*. Ver. 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may abound?* The *Inference* to vitious and corrupt minds is very natural and obvious. If God has sent his Son into the World to die for the Sins of Men; if Christ has given himself a sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World; is it not a rendring *honour* to Christ, to rely entirely upon *his* Merits; and to depend more upon *his* Satisfaction, than upon *Any* Virtuous Practice of our own? Is it not (they will say) a *Magnifying* of the Mercy of God, to think that a Vitious Life will be easily pardoned to those who *fully rely* upon the *Merits of Christ*? and may we not therefore *continue in Sin, that Grace may abound?* To This the Apostle, not without just indignation, replies, v. 2. *God forbid: how shall we that are* dead *to Sin, live any longer therein?* A Christian (he supposes,) *as* Such, even *essentially* to his being a Disciple of Christ, has *put off* That *Body of* Sin which Christ came to destroy; and can no more, with Any Consistency to his Profession, live in the Practice of any known Vice, than a man *naturally dead* can perform any *natural action of life*. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the Glory* (that is, by the *glorious Power*) *of the Father, even so We also should walk in Newness of Life.*

In which words there are *Three* Particulars principally remarkable. 1*st*, The Apostle here supposes, that the Great *End* and *Design* of the Gospel is to bring men to *Amendment* and *Newness of Life*. 2*dly*, he urges the consideration of the *Death* and *Resurrection of Christ*, as a great *Argument* to promote This End. And 3*dly*, He alledges, that the Great Design of *Baptism* in particular, is to *remind* us perpetually of This Argument, and to *inforce* it upon us.

I. *First*, The Apostle here supposes, that the Great *End* and *Design* of the Gospel, is to bring men to *Amendment* and *Newness of Life: Even so We also should walk in Newness of Life.* The only Reason why God, who stands in need of Nothing, and is infinitely Self-sufficient to his own Happiness, ever created any rational Creatures at all, is, that by following the Light of the Reason he has given them, and by imitating the moral Perfections of God, and by obeying his Commandments in the Practice of Virtue and Righteousness; they might, (as St. *Peter* expresses it) *become Partakers of the Divine Nature*, that is, might have such Degrees communicated to them of their Creator's Happiness as *irrational* Beings are by their nature incapable of. Now the Perfections of God being absolutely unchangeable, and the nature of Good and Evil essentially invariable; 'tis manifest that That Practice of Virtue and Righteousness, That Worship of God who ruleth over All, and That Justice and Goodness due from One Creature towards Another, in which the Essence of True Religion consists; must among *All* rational Beings, in *All* parts of the Universe, and in *All* periods of Time, be eternally and universally the Same. Had *All* creatures therefore *Always* continued innocent and virtuous, the Form and Method of Religion could never have admitted of Any Change. And for the same reason, when, upon the account of *Sin*, the Mercy of God has vouchsafed to appoint any particular method or institution of religion, in order to the acceptance and reconciliation of *Sinners*; 'tis evident that the ultimate *End* and *Design* of every such method or institution of religion can possibly be no Other, than the recovery or bringing back of such Persons to the same State, in which they would originally have been fixed, had there been No Transgression. Our Saviour expresses this Notion very emphatically, St. *Luke* v. 35. *They that are whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* Virtue is the *Life* and *Health* of the Soul: And as, in *all* cases in *general*, the ultimate End of whatever is intended for *restoration* or *recovery*, is always the attaining of that first and natural State, the Loss of which occasions a *Want* of Restoration or Recovery; so in *particular*, the End and Design of that religion, which the Gospel has appointed for the reconciliation *of* Sinners, is summed up in what the Text here styles *Newness of Life.*

Life. For, *for* This purpoſe, ſays the Apoſtle, *the Son of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the Works of the Devil*; 1 Joh. iii. 8: *The Works of the Devil*; that is, all thoſe *Sinful Habits* and *Vicious Practices of Men*, which they commit either through the *Temptation*, or after the *Example*, or agreeably to the *Inclinations and Deſires of* the Wicked One. Again: *Tit.* ii. 14, *Our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, ſays St. *Paul*, *gave himſelf for us* (to This End,) *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And the ſame Thing he elſewhere expreſſes in a very elegant and ſublime figure; *Eph.* ii. 10. *We are his Workmanſhip*, created *in Chriſt Jeſus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained that we ſhould walk in them.* And ſo particular a *Streſs* is laid upon this Great Truth, that the Scripture expreſly declares, it had been better for men *never* to have heard the Goſpel *at all*, than that it ſhould not produce in them the Fruit *of* a Virtuous Life. 2 *Pet.* ii. 20. *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them.* SERM. LIV.

From what has been ſaid upon *This* Head, evidently appears the Folly of making a comparative *oppoſition* (as Some have done) between *Chriſtianity* and *Morality*. For if the Great *End* and *Deſign of* the Goſpel, is to bring men to *Amendment* and *Newneſs of Life*; and *Newneſs of Life* is only another Name for the *Practice of Virtue*, which is *Morality*; 'tis plain there can be no other oppoſition made between *Chriſtianity* and *Morality*, than between the *Means* and the *End*. Much leſs ought true Virtue to be *lightly ſpoken of*, when compared with any *poſitive* Duty, or *ritual* Performance whatſoever: Becauſe this is the ſame Abſurdity, as preferring the *Means* which are in order to any *End*, before the *End* itſelf to be obtained by thoſe *Means*.

Alſo from what has been ſaid upon *This* Head, appears the Vanity of ſubſtituting any thing *elſe* in matters *of* religion, upon which finally to build our Hopes, beſides the Fruits of true *Virtue* and *Righteouſneſs of Life*. For if the great and ultimate End of the Goſpel, is to bring Men to *Repentance*, and *Amendment* of Manners; 'tis evident that whatever falls ſhort of this End, and proves ineffectual to it, cannot be finally *good and profitable unto Men*. *Profeſſing* the Religion of Chriſt is nothing, if men be not thereby made *better* than if they profeſſed it *not*. Having *propheſied in the Name of Chriſt*, and *in his Name* having *caſt out Devils*, and *in his Name done many wonderful Works*, is of no importance, if at the ſame time the Perſon be a Practiſer of thoſe *Works of Iniquity* which the *Works of Chriſt* were intended to deſtroy. Laſtly, *Laying hold upon Chriſt*, and *depending upon him* with a *ſtrong and confident Faith* is of no Benefit, *if That Faith* which is the *Root*, or *Tree* that ought to bring forth the *Fruits* of Righteouſneſs, be *itſelf* miſunderſtood as ſupplying the *Want* of That Fruit, which it is the *only Excellency* of the Root to produce.

And thus having explained the *Firſt* Particular in the Text, that the Great *End and Deſign* of the Goſpel, is to bring men to *Amendment and Newneſs of Life*; I proceed now to obſerve in the

II. *Second* place, That the Apoſtle here urges *particularly* the Conſideration of the *Death* and *Reſurrection of Chriſt*, as a great *Argument* to promote this End: *That, like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the Dead by the glory* (that is, by the *glorious Power*) *of the Father, even ſo We alſo ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life.* The Doctrine of Chriſt is *one continued Exhortation*, and his Life a perpetual *Example* of *Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs and all Virtue*. And the Deſign of his *Death and Reſurrection*, is, by making an *Atonement for paſt Sins*, and eſtabliſhing for *the future* a gracious *Covenant of Repentance*, to prevail with men effectually, by all the Arguments of *Life* and *Death*, to turn from the Ways *of Sin and Deſtruction*, into the Paths *of Virtue and everlaſting Happineſs*. *He died for All* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them, and roſe again.* And St. *Peter* in his Firſt Epiſtle, ch. 4. 1. *Foraſmuch then as Chriſt* (ſays he) *has ſuffered for us in the fleſh, arm yourſelves likewiſe with the ſame mind; for he that hath ſuffered in the Fleſh, hath ceaſed from Sin; that he no longer ſhould live the reſt of his time in the Fleſh, to the Luſts of men, but to the Will of* 2 Cor. v. 15.

SERM. LIV.

God. By the *Death of Christ*, God has made the severest Declaration possible, of his *Hatred against Sin*; and at the same time given the strongest attestation to the Truth of that Evangelical Doctrine, which indispensably requires *Amendment for* the *future*, upon the *forgiveness of* what is *past*. *Heb.* ix. 14. *The Blood of Christ, —— purges your Conscience from dead Works, to serve the Living God.* It eases the conscience, by giving men assurance of pardon; not that thereby they may become acceptable to God, without the Practice of Virtue; but that they may more effectually be encouraged, by true Repentance and Amendment to serve God for the future in Newness of Life. Before the Coming of Christ, the *Whole World*, in a manner, *lay in Wickedness*: The *Heathens*, generally speaking, being involved in the most enormous Vices; and the *Jews* also having far departed from true Virtue, by placing their Religion more in *typical* Purifications, than in that *real* Purity which those types were intended to represent. The Reformation *of Both* These, through the Preaching of That Doctrine which our Lord sealed with his *Death*, and confirmed by his *Resurrection*; the Apostle sets forth in a most lively and elegant manner, in his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, ch. ii. As to the converted *Heathens*; *Ye* (says he) *being in times past Gentiles in the Flesh, —— were without Christ, being Aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World*; —— *walking according to the Course of this World, according to —— the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: —— But Now, —— ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ.* And as to the converted *Jews*; *We also* (says he) *had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the Desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by Nature the children of wrath, even as Others; But God, who is rich in mercy, —— hath quickned us together with Christ.* These latter Words, *and were by* Nature *the children of Wrath*, have by Some been very absurdly understood, as if Men were Born *children of Wrath*, and were *of God* created *originally wicked*: Whereas the evident Meaning of the Apostle is, that wicked and debauched men, before their conversion to Christianity, were by the Practice of those Vices which *Habit* had made as it were *natural* to them, become Enemies to God, and *children of Wrath*. But *Christ* by his *death*, obtained pardon for as many of them, as, by putting away those Vices, would *die unto Sin*; and, by his *resurrection*, he gave assurance of eternal *life* to All, who in the *moral* sense, would first *rise with him unto Newness and Holiness of life*. According to the Analogy of which figurative expressions, *all* Sins in general are in Scripture frequently styled dead *works*; and *wicked* men are described as being *dead* in *Sin*; and they who have *forsaken* their Vices, are *dead* to *Sin*; and converted *Jews*, are *dead* from *the rudiments of the World*, and *dead* to *the Law*, that they may *live to God*: And all Sinners who have *reformed* their lives, are said to be *crucified with Christ*, and to have *crucified the flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; and that they are *dead, and their Life is hid with Christ in God*; and that they are *quickned with Christ*; and *risen with Christ*, and the like. And upon these figures of Speech, are grounded the following Exhortations; 2 *Tim.* ii. 11. *It is a faithful Saying; if we be dead with him, we shall also live with* him: And *Rom.* viii. 10. *If Christ be in you*, (that is, if ye be Christians indeed,) *the Body is dead* [as] *as to Sin, but the Spirit is life because of* [or as to] *Righteousness*: And in the Words immediately following my Text; *If we have been planted together in the likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the likeness of his Resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man* (that is, our former vitious course of life) *is crucified with him, that the body of Sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin: —— Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the Lusts thereof.*

ver. 11. ver. 2. ver. 13. ver. 3.

From what has been said upon *This* Head, there naturally and plainly arises This important Inference; that one of the *greatest* and most *pernicious Corruptions* possible of the Christian Religion, is *That kind of Reliance upon the Merits of Christ*, in which *wicked Christians* place their Hopes of Salvation, instead *of obeying* the *Commandments of* Christ delivered in his Gospel. Next to Total Infidelity, the greatest Enemy of true Religion is *Superstition*: And *of all* Superstitions, the most pernicious is That which *turns the grace of God into Wantonness*; which (as the

the Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it) makes *Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin*, that is, makes even the Goſpel itſelf an Incouragement to Wickedneſs. Now this is directly the caſe of all thoſe profeſſed Chriſtians, who, while they live vitiouſly, ſtill *rely upon the Merits of Chriſt* for Salvation; or, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *continue in Sin that Grace may abound.* Which is ſubverting intirely the whole Deſign of Religion. For Chriſt came into the World to procure pardon of *paſt* Sin, for *no other* reaſon but that he might more effectually prevent it for the *future.* And there *can* be no greater *Mockery* of God and Religion, than to turn That *Goodneſs* of God declared in the Goſpel, which was intended as the Great Motive to lead men to Repentance; to turn it into an argument for *Security* in continuing in Sin. *Rom.* ii. 4. *Deſpiſeſt thou the Riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering; not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to Repentance? But after thy hardneſs and impenitent heart treaſureſt up unto thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* SERM. LIV.

This therefore is the *Second* Particular remarkable in the Text; namely the conſideration of the *Death* and *Reſurrection of Chriſt*, here inſiſted upon as an *Argument*, to perſwade men to *Repentance* and *Amendment of Life.* The

III. *Third* and Laſt thing I propoſed to take notice of in the words, is the Apoſtle's here urging finally, that the Great Deſign of Baptiſm in particular, is to *remind* us perpetually of *This* Argument, and to *inforce* it upon us: *Know ye not, that as many of us as were* baptized *into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with Him by* Baptiſm *into death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory* (by the glorious Power) *of the Father, even ſo We alſo ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life.* Our Lord, when he ſent forth his Diſciples to preach the Goſpel to all Nations, commanded them to Baptize every one that was converted *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*: That is, to cauſe them to enter by Baptiſm into a ſolemn obligation, to dedicate themſelves to the Service of *God* in *That* Method of religion, which the *Son of God* came into the World to eſtabliſh, and confirmed by Prophecies and Miracles of the *Holy Ghoſt*. The Sacrament of *Baptiſm* therefore, according to this inſtitution of our Lord, is emphatically *ſignificant* of our Duty, and moſt aptly fitted to *remind* us of it perpetually, in the *three following reſpects*. *1ſt*, As being *in general* a ſolemn *initiation* into the Profeſſion *of That Religion*, the Great *End of which* is Holineſs of Life. *2dly*, As *typifying*, in a *particular* manner, the neceſſity *of moral* Purity and Righteouſneſs *of life*, by the ſimilitude of waſhing the *Body* with *water*. And *3dly*, (which is what the Apoſtle peculiarly inſiſts upon in the Text;) Baptiſm, as being an *emblem* or *repreſentation* of Men's *dying* with Chriſt, and *riſing* with him again; is a continual memorial of our Obligation to *put off* the *body of Sin*, and to *put on* the *new man*, (that is, a virtuous courſe of life) *which after God*, (that is, according to the example and commandments of God,) *is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs.*

1ſt, *Baptiſm* is *in general* a ſolemn *initiation* into the Profeſſion *of That Religion*, the Great *End of which* is *Holineſs of Life.* If therefore *That End* be not attained, there is then no Benefit in having been initiated into That Religion, the Only Uſe whereof is for the obtaining That End.

2dly, Baptiſm *typifies*, in a *particular* manner, the neceſſity of *Moral* Purity and Righteouſneſs *of Life*, by the ſimilitude of waſhing the *Body* with *Water*. And as, in *all* caſes, a *type* or *repreſentation* is nothing, without the *reality* of the thing intended to be *ſignified* thereby; ſo in this *preſent* point the Scripture is always *particularly careful*, to expreſs wherein the *Real efficacy* of this Sacrament conſiſts. In the *Prophetick* Deſcription, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 25, 27. after the figurative phraſes, *then will I ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean*; immediately follows the explication, *from all your* Idols *will I cleanſe you, and*——*cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my* judgments *and* do *them.* Our *Lord himſelf* in the very *words of inſtitution*; *Go ye* (ſays he) and *baptize all nations*, —— *teaching them to* do *whatſoever I have commanded you*: And again; *Except a man be born of the* Spirit, as well as *Water*, *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* The Apoſtle St. *Paul* accordingly, deſcribing Chriſt's *ſanctifying and cleanſing* his Church *with the waſhing of water by the Word*; immediately adds, by way of explication, *that he might*

preſent

SERM. LIV.

1 Cor. vi. 11.

preſent it to himſelf ——Holy, *and* without Blemiſh, *Eph.* v. 26. And elſewhere, ſpeaking of *particular Chriſtians*, he puts, *waſhed*, *ſanctified*, *juſtified*, as Synonymous Terms. And in his Epiſtle to *Titus*, he mentions the *waſhing of regeneration* and the *renewal of the Holy Ghoſt*, as two phraſes *equally*, and without any *difference* of ſignification, expreſſing the *effect* of That *Kindneſs and Love*,—*which God our Saviour ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour*, ch. iii. 4, 5, 6. In the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, *having our Bodies waſhed with pure Water*, and our *Hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience* are uſed as Phraſes of the ſame import, *ch.* x. 22. And St. *Peter*, ſtill more expreſly, (1 *Pet.* iii. 21.) declares the *Baptiſm*, which *ſaves us*, to be, *not the putting away of the filth of the Fleſh*, *but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God.*

3*dly*, (Which is the Argument peculiarly inſiſted upon in the text;) *Baptiſm*, as an *emblem of* men's *dying with Chriſt* and *riſing with him again*, is a continual memorial of our obligation to *put off* the *body of Sin*, and to *walk* with Chriſt in *newneſs of life*. This Argument the Apoſtle purſues at large, through the whole chapter. And in *Other* of his epiſtles; *Col.* ii. 12. Buried *with him in* Baptiſm, *wherein alſo ye are* riſen *with him*. Gal. iii. 27. *As many of you as have been* baptized *into Chriſt have* put on *Chriſt*. And Eph. iv. 22. *That ye put off*, *concerning the former converſation*, *the old man*, (that is, your antient manner of living), *which is corrupt according to the deceitful Luſts*; *And be renewed in the ſpirit of your Mind.*

The *Application* of what has been ſaid upon this *Laſt* General head, is; that, at the *firſt* Preaching of the Goſpel, the perſons brought to Baptiſm being ſuch as had been converted from among the Jews or Heathens; whereas *Now* they are generally ſuch as have been born of Chriſtian Parents; 'tis always to be underſtood, that all the ſimilitudes and compariſons, all the reaſonings and arguments, drawn *in Scripture* from the Nature and Form, from the deſigns and obligations of Baptiſm; muſt Now be applied to Chriſtians, at ſuch time as they profeſs themſelves to be Diſciples of Chriſt, and Followers of his Religion, with *underſtanding*, *knowledge* and *choice*. Which matter, if duly conſidered, would have a great Effect upon the Hearts and Lives of all reaſonable perſons. And that it may have ſuch Effect, God of his infinite Mercy grant, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON LV.

Of being baptized into the Name of any Perſon.

1 Cor. i. 13.

.....or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

THE Apoſtle is in this Chapter reproving the *Corinthians*, for their unreaſonable Animoſities and Diviſions among themſelves, ſo contrary to the nature and obligations of their Holy Profeſſion, ſo unbecoming the Name and Character of Chriſtians. They had *all* been inſtructed in one and the ſame *Faith*; They had *all* been baptized with one and the ſame *Baptiſm*; They had *all* profeſſed themſelves Diſciples of One only *Lord and Saviour*, Jeſus Chriſt, and yet afterwards, falling into Parties, and laying ſtreſs upon particularities, and valuing themſelves upon adhering, one to *One* Form or Method of teaching, and Others to *Another*; they by degrees forgot the *Great* and *Fundamental* Obligations of Chriſtianity, and departed from the Simplicity of their *common* Religion. One was for following *Paul*, Another for *Apollos*, and a third for *Cephas*. This Beginning of Fooliſh Diviſions and needleſs Animoſities, This Breach of Chriſtian Charity and univerſal Love, the Apoſtle very largely and ſeverely

SERM. LV.

SERM. LV.

severely reproves in This and the following Chapters: And no where with greater elegance and more affectionate sharpness, than in the words of the Text: *Is Christ*, says he, *divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the Name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say, that I had baptized in my own Name.*

In Discoursing upon which words, I shall consider, 1*st*, What the Meaning of *This Phrase* is in general, being *baptized in*, or *into the Name of* any Person. 2*dly*, What Effect, the consideration of our being All baptized particularly into the Name of *Christ*, ought to have upon us. And 3*dly*, What the *Nature of That Corruption* is, and what the *ill consequences* of it, which St. *Paul* here reproves in the *Corinthians* by This sharp and severe Question; *Were ye baptized in the Name of Paul?*

1*st*, As to the Meaning of this Phrase in general, of being *baptized in*, or *into the Name* of any person; 'tis to be observed, that Baptism, by an expressive emblem, or figure, of washing the *Body* with Water, signifies and represents a Change in the *Mind* of the baptized Person, from *One* sort of Profession or Practice to *Another*. And because This Change in the Person's Mind, This resolution *of forsaking* One State of life, *one* sort of Profession or Practice, and *entring upon Another*, is, in This case, supposed to be worked and effected, by the Preaching, Admonition, or Exhortation of Some *Teacher*, who either by Reason and Argument and Doctrinal Persuasion, or by Evidence of Authority and Divine Commission, convinces Men that the Change he endeavours to work in them, will be acceptable and well-pleasing to God; hence the Action of *Baptism*, or the external Signification of this inward Change, is stiled a *being baptized in*, or *into the Name of* the *Teacher*, whose *Disciple*, or the *Follower* of whose Doctrine, the baptized person hereby professes himself to be. Thus the children of *Israel*, because when they passed thro' the red Sea, and were conducted in the Wilderness by a Cloud, they in this whole matter professed themselves to be Followers of That Religion which God taught them by *Moses*; therefore they are said by the Apostle to have been *All* baptized unto *Moses*, *in the Cloud and in the Sea*. And they who by the preaching of *John the Baptist*, were prevailed upon to repent and amend their lives, through a firm Belief of the Promises God had given them of the Messiah then speedily to appear; were *baptized*, as the Scripture expresses it, *into John's Baptism*; and called *The Disciples of John*. In like manner, they who afterward by the Preaching of *Christ* and *his Apostles*, were converted to the Belief and Profession of the Gospel; were baptized *in the Name*, or *into the Name*, *of the Father*, *and of the Son*, *and of the Holy Ghost*. That is; They made a solemn Profession of their Believing the Doctrines, and of their Resolving to obey the Precepts of that Religion, which *God the Father Almighty* revealed and taught by his *Son Jesus Christ*, and confirmed by the miraculous Testimonies of the *Holy Ghost*. Which being the same thing as, briefly and in Other words, professing themselves *Christians*, or *Disciples of Christ*; they are therefore elsewhere spoken of, in a general and less distinct manner of expression, as having been baptized *in the Name of the Lord Jesus*, or, *in the Name of Jesus Christ*, *for the remission of Sins*, Acts ii. 38. And those numerous places in the new Testament, where we read, that *whosoever shall* call on *the* Name *of the Lord*, *shall be saved*; and where Christians are distinguished by the character, of those who call *on the* Name of the Lord Jesus; are, according to the true sense of the Original, plainly of the same import with That Other expression, *Acts* xv. 17. *All the Gentiles*, upon *whom my* Name is called, *saith the Lord*; that is, all those who have sincerely embraced the Profession of Christ's religion, and are accordingly baptized into an obligation to obey it. And thus therefore in the Text likewise; the Question here put by the Apostle, *Were ye baptized in the Name of Paul?* is as much as if he had said, Am I your Master? Are ye *My* Disciples? do ye profess a Religion of *Mine?* have *I* taught you any *doctrine* of my *Own?*

Acts viii. 16. xix. 5. Acts ii. 21. Rom. x. 13. Acts ix. 14. 21. 1 Cor. i. 2.

And This may suffice for explication of the *first* particular; what the Meaning of this Phrase is in *general*, of being *baptized in* or *into the Name of* any person.

2. The *Second* thing I proposed, was, to inquire *What Effect* the consideration of our being all baptized *particularly* into the Name of *Christ*, ought to have upon

us.

us. And *This* evidently is, that we ought to look upon our ſelves as *His* Diſciples, obliged to hearken to *His* Doctrine, to follow *His* Inſtructions, to obey *His* Commandments.

The *Original* Authority and Dominion of *God* over the Univerſe, over *All rational* Creatures; and *Their* conſequent Duty and Subjection to *Him*; St. *Paul* elegantly expreſſes, by ſtiling *Them* the *Family in Heaven and Earth*, and *Him* the *Father, of whom* That *whole Family is named*, Eph. iii. 15. They bear *his Name*; that is, they are *His* Property, they derive from him, they depend upon him, they acknowledge *him* as their Head, their Father, the Author of their Being, and their Supreme Governour; In virtue of which relation, All Honour, All Obedience, All Subjection, is neceſſarily and uniformly due to him from Them. And This in their *natural* capacity, as they are *in general* his Creatures, or the Work of his Hands. In the *religious* ſenſe, and where there comes *more particularly* a *diſtinction* to be made, between thoſe who are only ſubject by *neceſſity* to God's kingdom of *Nature*, and thoſe who are ſubject by *Choice* to his Kingdom of *Grace*; the Scripture ſpeaks of theſe latter, as, in a ſpecial and more peculiar manner, bearing the *Name of* God, or ſtanding in a nearer and more proper relation to him. *Him that overcometh*, ſaith our Saviour, *will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, and I will write upon him the* Name *of my God*, Rev. iii. 12. And elſewhere, the whole Body of our Lord's ſincere Followers are diſtinguiſhed, as *having his Father's* Name *written in their Foreheads*. And in the deſcription of the Happineſs of their final ſtate, one principal character made uſe of is, that they ſhall *ſee the Face of* God, *and his* Name *ſhall be in their foreheads*. The Meaning is; they ſhall be received and acknowledged by him as his Sons and his Servants, as being in a more particular manner his Family or Houſhold. *The Tabernacle of God* ſhall be *with* them, *and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God*, Rev. xxi. 3.

ch. xiv. 1.

ch. xxii. 4.

By the ſame Analogy, bearing likewiſe the Name of *Chriſt*, or having been *baptized in* His Name, ſignifies a conſtant acknowledgment and profeſſion of *His* relation to *Us*, and *Ours* towards *Him*. That *He* is our Saviour and Lord, our Mediator and Advocate, the only Revealer of the Will of God to us in the preſent time, and by him conſtituted our Judge at the laſt day. And that conſequently *We* are his Diſciples and Followers; who are to receive from *him* the doctrine of true Religion; to look upon *him* as the Way, the Truth, and the Life; to adhere ſtedfaſtly to what *he* has taught us, and to practiſe carefully what *he* has commanded. St. *Luke* in his hiſtory of the *Acts*, tells us, that *the Diſciples were called* Chriſtians *firſt in Antioch*, ch. xi. 26. By their *Adverſaries*, it was intended as a Name of *Reproach*; By *Themſelves*, it was eſteemed as a Title of the higheſt *Dignity*: By *Both*, it was underſtood not to be a bare empty Name; but to be expreſſive and declarative of their adhering to Chriſt's Doctrine, and of their obſerving his Laws. Our Lord himſelf, ſpeaking of thoſe, who, whether few or many in Number, ſhould in their Teaching adhere ſtrictly to the Rule and Doctrine of Truth; inſomuch that *whatſoever they ſhould bind on earth, ſhould be bound in heaven, and whatſoever they ſhould looſe on Earth ſhould be looſed in Heaven*; (as in the caſe of men's preaching the *Sincere and Uncorrupt Doctrine of* Truth it muſt needs be;) He expreſſes it, by their being gathered together *in* his *Name*; Matt. xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together* in my Name, *there am I in the midſt of them*. He does not mean, Where-ever men *call themſelves Chriſtians*, or *ſay unto him, Lord, Lord*; but where-ever they really *are*, what That *Name* ſignifies; and *Do*, as he has taught them, *the Will of his Father which is in Heaven*. That *profeſſing* the Name of Chriſt, or being baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, is nothing, without being ſincerely ſollicitous to underſtand what his Doctrine truly is, and careful to obey the Laws he has given us, St. *Paul* declares to us in a very affectionate manner, *Rom.* vi. 3. *Know ye not that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his Death?---knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve Sin.* And again, *Gal.* iii. 27, *As many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt*; that is, have put yourſelves under an obligation of laying aſide all other Diſtinctions, and of being united upon the Foot of obedience to his alone Commands. *There is henceforth neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free;*——*for ye are all One in*

Chriſt

SERM. LV.

Chriſt Jeſus: One, not in Title and Denomination only, but in reality of ſincere affection; One, in Faith; One, in Charity; One, in uniform Obedience to the Commands of Chriſt; without which 'tis of no Moment to have been called by his Name. The ſame method of arguing, is again inſiſted upon by the ſame Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* ii. 19. *Having this Seal,* —— *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.* The manner of expreſſion, *having This Seal,* is a remarkable alluſion to certain figurative paſſages of Scripture, ſome of which I have already mentioned. For as St. *John* in his Viſion, ſaw the Servants of God *ſealed in their foreheads*; and the true Diſciples of Chriſt, *having his Father's Name written in their foreheads*; and St. *Paul* himſelf, in ſome other of his epiſtles, ſpeaks of ſincere Chriſtians as being *ſealed by the Holy Ghoſt unto the day of redemption*; ſo here likewiſe, *The Foundation,* ſays he, or *the Covenant of God, ſtandeth ſure, having This Seal,* —— *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity:* His meaning is; Let no man think, that his title to God's covenanted mercies, depends upon his bearing the *Name* of a Chriſtian; but upon his being conſtantly influenced by That conſideration, to be *in reality* what That Name denotes, a practiſer of univerſal righteouſneſs, meekneſs and charity. As a ſort of *Memorial* of This obligation, a Cuſtom has long prevailed in the Chriſtian Church, that every perſon, at the time he is baptized, ſhould have given him what we call a *Chriſtian Name.* And the Deſign was prudent; that our very *Name* ſhould remind us of our Holy Profeſſion; And becauſe Chriſtians received their *own Name* at the time they were baptized into the *Name of our Lord*; that therefore they ſhould never hear their *own* Name mentioned, without being put in mind of their being dedicated to *his.* The very *Name* therefore and *Title* of a Chriſtian, is a great Reproach to every man, who, in his Life and Converſation, takes no care to *anſwer the ſignification,* and to *verify the intention of* it; but intirely forgets or diſhonours the *Thing,* while the *Word* or *Name* is perpetually in his mouth.

And thus having at large explained *What Effect* the conſideration of our being *All* baptized into the Name of *Chriſt,* ought to have upon us; It remains now in the 3*d* and *laſt* place, That I proceed to ſhow what the *Nature of That corruption* is, and what the *ill conſequences* of it, which St. *Paul* here reproves in the *Corinthians* by this ſharp and ſevere queſtion; *Were ye baptized* in the Name of *Paul?* And This, from what has been already ſaid, is very apparent. For if being baptized in the Name of *Chriſt,* ſignifies being Diſciples and Followers of *Him*; by the ſame reaſon, being baptized in the name of *any other* perſon or perſons, ſignifies likewiſe being Followers of *Him* or *Them.* And for Chriſtians, who were baptized in the Name of *Chriſt;* to behave themſelves nevertheleſs in ſuch a manner, as if they took themſelves to have been baptized in the Name of *other* Teachers; evidently denotes all ſuch mutual *Schiſms* and *Differences,* as ariſe among Chriſtians from their following and being fond of the *Doctrines of Men*; the Doctrines either of *particular* men, or of any *Numbers* or *Bodies* of men whatſoever. *It has been declared unto me of you, my Brethren,* ſays the Apoſtle in the words juſt before my Text, *that there are Contentions among you,* ver. 11. *What* thoſe contentions were, he explains in ver. 12; My Meaning (ſays he) is This; I hear, *that every one of you ſaith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Chriſt.* Some were for following *one* Man's Doctrine, and ſome *another's.* To this Folly of theirs, he gives a very ſharp Reproof, in the 13th verſe, in which are the words of my Text: *Is Chriſt* (ſays he) *divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the Name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Criſpus and Gaius; Leſt any ſhould ſay, that I had baptized in my own Name.* Had theſe their differences, (which St. *Paul* calls *Schiſms*;) had they regarded, not *ſingle perſons,* but *Bodies of Men*; the caſe would ſtill have been exactly the ſame. Had every one of them ſaid, *I am of the Church of Corinth, and I of Epheſus, and I of Philippi, and I of Rome:* St. *Paul* would ſtill have given them the very ſame Reproof; *Is Chriſt divided? was the City or People of Corinth crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the City or People of Corinth?* In like manner, could St. *Paul* hear men contending and pleading, that one of them was *for the Council of Trent,* Another *for the Synod of Dort, and* a Third, *for That of Conſtantinople*; he would ſtill make the very ſame Reply; *Is Chriſt divided? was the Council of Trent crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the Synod of Conſtantinople or Dort?* Were

it

SERM. LV.

it lawful for *Any* man, or any Number *of Men*, to have Any *Doctrines* of their *own*, or any Followers to be diſtinguiſhed by *Their* Denomination; 'twould be reaſonable to think, that the *Apoſtles* certainly might of All others, beſt have claimed that Privilege. Yet St. *Paul*, we find, was very careful, was very ſollicitous, not to give any occaſion to have it thought, that there was any ſuch thing as the *Doctrine of Paul*, much leſs any ſuch thing as the *Doctrine of the Church of Corinth*, or *Rome*, or of Any other than *Chriſt* only, *who Alone* was *crucified for us*, and in *whoſe name only* we *were baptized*, and not in the *Name*, or into the *Doctrines*, of *any other* Teachers whatſoever. For my *own* part, ſays he, *I determined, not to know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified: — And my ſpeech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom; — that your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God*, ch. ii. 2. He diſclaims all power in *himſelf*, to *add* any thing to the Doctrine of Chriſt, *any* notions, *any* particularities, *any* diſtinguiſhing doctrines of his *own*. The Doctrine of *Chriſt*, who alone *was crucified for them*, and *in whoſe name they were* All *baptized*; he *ſuppoſes*, they *All* underſtood and embraced: Otherwiſe they were not capable of being Members of Chriſt's Church, in the Senſe that perſons of riper years were admitted ſo to be. The Doctrine of *Chriſt*, I ſay, into which they were baptized, he *ſuppoſes* they *All* underſtood; namely, the Doctrine *of Repentance from Dead Works*, and *of Faith towards God*; of the *Reſurrection of the Dead*, and *of eternal Judgment*. And as to any *additional* doctrines, by which *One* party of Chriſtians might be diſtinguiſhed from *another*; which he elſewhere calls, *unlearned* queſtions; in the original it is, *untaught*, things which were no part of the *inſtruction* of a *Chriſtian*; As to *theſe*, he *Thus* expreſſes his Sentiments; *I fear*, ſays he, *leſt by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his Subtilty, ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the* Simplicity *that is in Chriſt*. For, *Other foundation can no man lay, than That is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt*. And though *We* ourſelves, ſays he, *or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Goſpel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed*. By *preaching another Goſpel*, he does not mean ſetting up a new Religion in oppoſition to Chriſtianity; but, as he expreſly explains himſelf in the verſe foregoing, *Gal.* i. 6, 7, he directs his diſcourſe againſt Thoſe, who *called men to another Goſpel, which is not another*; That is, who to the Goſpel of Chriſt *added* their *own* peculiar Doctrines as *Marks of diſtinction* among Chriſtians, thereby giving unavoidable occaſion to Diviſions and mutual Schiſms in the Body of Chriſt; Directly contrary to that Great Precept of our Lord, *Mat.* xxiii. 9. *Call no man your Father upon the Earth, for One is your Father which is in Heaven, Neither be ye called* Maſters, *for One is your Maſter, even Chriſt*. As Chriſt alone was *crucified* for us, ſo in *His* Name *only*, (ſays the Apoſtle,) into *His* Doctrine *only*, were we *baptized*; and not into the particular doctrines of any *other* man, or any *Sect of men* whatſoever. This is the Root of Chriſtian Unity, the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, the Unity of the One undivided and undefiled Spouſe of Chriſt; which is the Temple, the Houſe, the Church of the Living God; diſperſed in All Ages, and in All places, over the Face of the whole Earth; and yet united in One Holy Bond, in One indiſſoluble Tie, of Truth and Charity. For notwithſtanding the numberleſs mutual *Schiſms* and *Differences*, among the various worldly Sects or Bodies of men, who place the Sum of their religion in following the doctrines and ceremonies each of their own Sect; yet concerning all real and ſincere Chriſtians in every place, who, without laying any Streſs on the Traditions of men, endeavour carefully to ſtudy and underſtand the Doctrine, and to obey the Laws and Commandments of *Chriſt*, into whom alone they were baptized; (and who conſequently are the True *Church* of Chriſt;) concerning *Theſe*, I ſay, the ſimilitude uſed by St. *Paul* is ſtill and always true, that *as the Body* (of a man) *is One, and hath many members, and all the Members of that One body, being many, are One body, ſo alſo is Chriſt; For by one Spirit are we all baptized into One body, — and have been all made to drink into* * *One Spirit*: So that as to the Fundamentals of Religion (upon which alone Theſe perſons lay any conſiderable ſtreſs,) they are all of them entirely *One Body and One Spirit, even as they are called in One hope of their calling; having One Lord, One Faith, One Baptiſm, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all*, Eph. iv. 4.

ἀταξίτοι *not taught as Baptiſm.*

2 Tim. ii. 23, 2 Cor. xi. 3. 1 Cor. iii. 11,

* ἓν πνεῦμα, or ἓν πνεύματι; *compare* 1 Cor. x. 2.

SERM. LV.

Men of evil and corrupt minds, even in St. *Paul's* days, began to depart from this *Simplicity* of the doctrine of Chriſt, and to form themſelves into Sects and Parties under different denominations, occaſioning mutual Schiſms and uncharitable Diviſions among Chriſtians; Ch. iii. of this 1 *Cor.* ver. 3, *Whereas*, ſays he, *there is among you envying and ſtrife and diviſions; are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* That is, do ye not behave yourſelves more like the profane and corrupt Infidels of This preſent World, than like Diſciples of Chriſt? *For while One ſays, I am of Paul, and Another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?* That is, Do ye not ſhow yourſelves more concerned for particular *Parties*, than for propagating univerſally the *Truth of* Chriſt, and the *Practice of* That Doctrine which is according to Holineſs. In *later* and more corrupt Ages, this evil Spirit has continually increaſed among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians. And the *Conſequences*, the *natural* and *neceſſary* Conſequences of it, have been Animoſities, Contentions, Hatred, Schiſms, Wars, Fightings, Perſecutions, Ravages, and Devaſtations of the World. The *Remedy*, is *One* only; a *very obvious* remedy, and the *only poſſible* one; even *This*, preſcribed by the Apoſtle in the Text; that *All Chriſtians*, every *ſingle* Chriſtian, and All *Bodies* of Chriſtians, whether ſmall or great, would ſeriouſly conſider, that as *Chriſt alone* was *crucified* for them, ſo in His *Name only* were they All *baptized*, and not in the Name of *Paul*, or of any *other* man, or of any *Sect of men*, whatſoever: And that conſequently they ought All to continue in the *Simplicity* of the Profeſſion and Practice of That Goſpel, into which they were All baptized; without contentiouſly adding, each of them their *own* peculiar Doctrines, to the Doctrine of *Chriſt*; which muſt unavoidably be the Occaſion of never-ceaſing diviſions. In the *Great Foundations of Faith and Practice*, they do already agree. In *other* matters, if every one would but allow to *Others*, what he knows and expects ſhould in Chriſtian Charity be by Them allowed to *Him*; however men might and cannot but differ about many *Things*, yet with regard to each other's *perſons* they might eaſily (according to St. *Paul's* advice) be *of the ſame mind one towards another, perfectly joined together in the ſame mind and in the ſame judgment*, 1 Cor. i. 10. *holding the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* So the Apoſtle expreſſes it with great accuracy: Holding, not *unity of opinion* in the bond of *ignorance*, nor unity of *practice* in the bond *of hypocriſy*; but *the Unity of the Spirit*, the unity of a *Chriſtian* and *Charitable* Spirit, in the bond of *Peace*.

Rom. xii. 16.

SERMON

SERMON LVI.

The Nature, End and Design of the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 25.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the new Testament in my Blood; This do ye, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

SERM. LVI.

ONE great End of our Saviour's coming into the World, was to deliver men from that yoke of ceremonious performances, which *neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear*: and to establish Religion upon the Foot of Virtue and everlasting Righteousness. The World had from the beginning been so addicted to ritual and external observances, and laid so great stress on sensitive and outward parts of Worship; that God, in condescension to their infirmity, and considering the hardness of their Hearts, had for several ages thought fit to prove the obedience of his peculiar people the Jews, by giving them such positive precepts, as had not in themselves any real and intrinsic worth; but their obligation depended wholly, upon their being positively commanded. These rites, were external and sensible; suited to the capacity of such persons, whose minds could not immediately relish the more sublime and spiritual parts of Religion. A willing and diligent observance of them, was indeed an evident proof of an obedient and sincere Mind; and a wilful neglect of them, when commanded, a manifest token of a stiff-necked, stubborn, and perverse generation; but yet they were not, *in their own nature*, Acts of Piety; or conduced any thing, *of themselves*, towards the perfecting of the Soul, and making it like unto God. Hence, tho' these things *were not to be left undone*; yet the *weightier matters of the Law*,

SERM. LVI.

Law, were always *judgment, mercy, and truth*. To *these*, God continually exhorted his people by the Prophets; and declared upon all occasions, that their ritual observations, *in comparison of* these more important Duties, were of no value; and *without* them, were even abominations in his Sight. *Thinkest thou that I will eat bulls flesh, or drink the blood of Goats?* No; *But offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High*, Ps. l. 13. God did therefore, by a Succession of Prophets, wean the Jews by degrees, as they were able to bear it, from their too high esteem of ritual and ceremonious performances; and inculcated to them the true and spiritual nature of Religion; till at last, in the fulness of time, when the World was prepared for the reception of the Gospel, he wholly abolished those rites by the coming of his Son, whom he *sent forth* into the World *made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons*. Our Religion therefore *Now* consists not in such outward and ceremonial parts of Worship, whose observance was difficult, and their signification oft-times obscure. We know that *God is a Spirit; and they that will worship him* acceptably, *must worship him in Spirit and in Truth*. The Perfection of our Religion, is to imitate the Life of God in Holiness, and *having escaped the corruption that is in the World through lust*, i. e. thro' the Temptations of Ambition, Covetousness and Sensuality; having escaped These, *to become partakers of the divine nature*. The *Promises* of the Gospel are almost wholly spiritual; and its Precepts accordingly are so excellent, as, not only by virtue of God's promise and appointment, but even in their *own Nature* also, to fit and prepare us for that truly spiritual life in Heaven. But then, as we are not *yet* actually in the state of Perfection, but only in a state of preparation for it; as we are here confined to these earthly Bodies, and to converse with sensible and corporeal objects; so the inward devotion of our Minds, must be excited and expressed, by outward acts of Religion. We *must glorify God both in our Body and in our Spirit, which are God's*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. No less therefore do *They* err, who would exclude *all* outward Acts of Worship from true Religion, than they who place Religion (as the greatest part of Men are apt to do) almost wholly in them. Our Minds must be filled with a due honour, and reverence towards God; and that disposition must be maintained and show forth itself, in proper Acts of external worship. And here our Saviour has not confined us, to difficult and burdensom forms; but only that *all things be done decently and in order*. We are not obliged to such positive and ritual observances, as the Jews of old; but only to show forth the religious affections of our minds in such outward acts, as are in their own nature apt to *excite* that devotion, and to *express* it. There are no more than two positive institutions in the Christian Church, as of necessity *generally* to Salvation; Baptism and the Lord's Supper; And these, so extremely significant, and the connexion between the Sign and the thing signified so evident, that they can hardly be called barely positive institutions. By the *One*, we are admitted into the Society of Christians, and made members of the mystical Body of Christ; By the *Other*, we are confirmed and established in that state; and receive spiritual nourishment, as members united to the Head; being made partakers of the benefits of his Death and Passion.

The Words of the Text, are part of the History St. *Paul* gives us of the institution of his latter Sacrament; exactly agreeable to the Account that three of the Evangelists give us, of the same institution. The Occasion of the Apostle's repeating it in this place, was the disorderly manner of the *Corinthians* communicating; who, by reason of many divisions among themselves, and thro' the pride of the rich despising the poor, received this Holy Sacrament without a Devotion suitable to so sacred an institution; *not discerning*, (as the Apostle expresses it, ver. 29.) *the Lord's Body*; not distinguishing it sufficiently from a worldly or common feast; not considering the Solemnity, and Design of the Action; not having their minds prepared with worthy Qualifications, to approach with due Reverence the Table of the Lord. In order to remedy this their carelessness, and prevent the like unbecoming behaviour for the future; the Apostle thought no Argument more proper, than to repeat to them the *very words* of our Lord's institution: Which containing in *themselves* a plain account of the End and Design of this Holy Sacrament,

Sacrament, could not but put them to ſhame, and be a ſtrong reproof of their unworthy behaviour; that they ſhould ſo ſoon forget the *main and principal* intent of their coming together; and err, not in an external circumſtance, or in a matter of form; but in ſuch a particular, as ſhew them to have neglected that admonition and precept, which in expreſs words, was a part, and a principal part, of the *inſtitution itſelf*; *This do in remembrance of me.* For it was not poſſible, they ſhould at the very time of their religious aſſembly have run into *exceſs*; if they had conſidered, that what they were then doing, was in *remembrance* of the *Death and Paſſion of Chriſt*, who gave himſelf a Ranſom for them to that very End, that he might redeem them from all worldly and inordinate deſires: It was not poſſible, they ſhould at the very time of their receiving the Holy Communion, have deſpiſed their poor Brethren, and treated them uncharitably and with contempt; if they had conſidered, that the Action they were then about, was a Solemn *ſhewing forth the Lord's Death*, a ſolemn profeſſion of their belief in a crucified Saviour, a publick declaration of their Hope of Salvation only thro' the merits of *his* Death, who died equally for poor and rich, for the mean and for the honourable; and made it his laſt Deſire and Commandment before his Death, that they who would be *his* Diſciples, ſhould love one another *without diſtinction* of worldly conſiderations, and be Examples of Charity to the whole World. Nothing therefore could be a juſter and ſtronger reproof, to the *preſent* careleſs and uncharitable behaviour of the *Corinthians*; nothing more inſtructive to them, how to behave themſelves worthily and becomingly for the *future*; than to repeat, as St. *Paul* here does, the ſolemn words themſelves of our Lord's own inſtitution; which ſo plainly and with ſuch Authority expreſs the nature and deſign of his Holy Sacrament. *For I have received*, (ſaith he) *of the Lord, that which alſo I delivered unto you; that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, Take, Eat; This is my Body which is broken for you; This do in remembrance of Me: After the ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood; This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me: In remembrance of me*; i. e. in commemoration of my Death and Paſſion; *ſhewing* forth, (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it in the following verſe,) *the Lord's Death till he come.*

SERM. LVI.

In diſcourſing upon theſe Words, the

1*ſt* Thing proper to be obſerved in them and conſidered, is the *general Nature, End, and Deſign* of this Holy Communion: expreſſed by our Saviour in theſe Phraſes, *This is my Body, which is broken for you*; and *This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood; This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me:* Do it *in remembrance of Me*; i.e. Let it be a *perpetual ſolemn Commemoration* of my Death and Paſſion; and a continual Occaſion of your meditating upon the ſpiritual Benefits purchaſed to you thereby: Meditate ſeriouſly and devoutly, upon the wonderful Love of *God*, the Supreme Lord and Father of all, in ſending freely into the World no meaner a perſon than his own Son, to become a Sacrifice and Propitiation for all Sins forſaken and amended. Meditate upon the Love alſo of *Chriſt*, in ſubmitting willingly to this good pleaſure of his Father; in ſubmitting willingly to *Death*, even the Death of the *Croſs*, to accompliſh this merciful and gracious Deſign: *For greater Love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his Friends*, St. Joh. xv. 13. Think with a Juſt Senſe upon the Humility and Condeſcenſion of *him*, who *being in the form of God*, i. e. who being the perſon by whom God from the Beginning created and governs all things, yet *did not affect to appear in that form*, to appear *like unto God*, to appear (as he might have done) in the glory of his Father; but voluntarily *made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men, and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs.* Conſider, with due affection of mind, the vile and heinous nature of *Sin*; conſider it with the higheſt indignation, and with the firmeſt reſolutions againſt it; which, in the Wiſdom of the Almighty's Government, was the Occaſion of ſuch a Humiliation to the beloved Son of God, in order to expiate and purchaſe pardon, for it: And let your frequent *eating this Bread, and drinking this Cup*, be a conſtant Remembrancer to your Thoughts, an Aſſiſtance to your Devotion, and a perpetual renewing of theſe ſpiritual meditations. *Do this, in remembrance of Me.*

SERM. LVI.

The *Mind* of Man, in this present State, is so constantly and so strongly affected by the impressions of Sensible Objects which perpetually surround it, that it can very difficultly conceive of things spiritual, purely and abstractedly by themselves: It is so closely united with Matter, and its attention so continually and powerfully sollicited by external and corporeal objects; that to meditate with any closeness and application of Mind on things remote from Sense, (though indeed the most natural and proper operation of the Soul,) is yet become one of the hardest parts of our Duty, and the want of it one of the greatest occasions of Sin. The chief Reason, why men, who seem convinced in their minds of the Truth and Importance of Religion, of the certainty of a Judgment to come, and who will readily acknowledge the infinite disproportion between things temporal and eternal, between spiritual and earthly concerns; yet at the same time, in their practice prefer things earthly before spiritual, and temporal concerns before eternal; the Reason of This, I say, is want of frequent and serious Consideration: And the reason why they do not consider, is, because the capacity of their Mind is so wholly taken up, and their Attention so constantly employed, about sensible Objects; that either they turn not their thoughts at all towards things moral and spiritual; or, if they do, yet These take so little hold, that they are presently diverted; and make such slight impressions, that they are immediately swallowed up and lost, among the deeper impressions made by the Objects of Sense. In consideration of this weak and depraved state of man's Soul it is, that God, who is a Spirit infinitely removed from Sense, the King immortal, invisible, whom no man hath seen nor can see, has, in all his Revelations and Discoveries of himself to mankind, represented himself, not by any sublime descriptions of his nature and essence, (which are commonly barren and unfruitful Speculations,) but represents himself affectionately under the character of being Author of some great and memorable Work worthy of God, for the good and benefit of Mankind: That so men might neither on the one hand have any occasion given them to frame to themselves any likeness or similitude of God; which is the greatest Indignity; nor yet on the other side want such a just Idea of him, as they might fix their thoughts and Meditations upon. Thus to the Patriarchs he stiled himself, *God who created the Heavens and the Earth, and all things that are therein.* To the Nation of the Jews, *God who brought them out of the Land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*; To us Christians; *God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And because the great End and Essence of Religion is to imitate the nature and life of God, in Holiness, Justice, Mercy, Truth, and the rest of his commendable Attributes; therefore he has exemplified that life to us, in his Son Christ Jesus; clothing him in flesh, and sending him to dwell among us, that he might *leave us a* visible and sensible *Example, that we should follow his steps.* Further; because men are usually as unapt to *Remember*, as they are at first slow to *Apprehend*, things of a spiritual nature; God has therefore generally been pleased to use the same means, as in *conveying* spiritual Notions first into our minds, so in *keeping them up* there likewise after we have once received them, by the help of *continued* outward and sensible Signs. For such is our Frame, that *Any* sensible Memorial makes naturally a deeper and more lasting impression upon us, than a mere historical narration of the Fact to be remembred: And the more proper and significant, the more express and pertinent the Memorial is, the *more* strongly does it still affect us. When God entred into Covenant with *Abraham*, to be a God unto Him and to his Seed after him; he instituted the rite of Circumcision, as a perpetual memorial of it to after-generations; and *it shall be*, says he, *a* Token *of the Covenant between Me and You*, Gen. xvii. 11. In like manner under the *Mosaical* Institution, the Jews had several sensible Signs and positive Rites appointed them; for the keeping up in their minds a continual *Remembrance* of God's commands, or for lasting memorials of some peculiar blessings; *That ye seek not after your own Heart, and* after *your own Eyes*, but may remember *and do all my Commandments, and be holy unto* the Lord *your God*, Num. xv. 40. Of this, we have several instances in the Books of the Law; But the most remarkable one of all, and that which bears most Analogy to our Sacramental remembrance of the Death of Christ in the Eucharist, is the Feast of the *Passover*; appointed (as is set down at large in the xiith of *Exodus*,) for a perpetual *commemoration* of the miraculous deliverance of the people of the Jews

out

out of *Egypt*, when *the Lord* paſſed over *the houſes of the children of Iſrael, but ſmote all the firſt-born of the Egyptians* with Death. This bringing up the *Iſraelites* out of the land of *Egypt*, was the greateſt and moſt wonderful deliverance that had ever been vouchſafed to any Nation. They had been long kept in ſervitude, and oppreſſed by a mighty and potent People, without any poſſibility of deliverance in all human appearance; and their work was exacted *with rigor*, ſo that it was called by way of eminence *the houſe of bondage*, and *the iron furnace wherein they were made to ſerve*: Yet did God bring them forth *with a ſtrong hand and with an out-ſtretched arm*, with *ſigns and wonders and* with *mighty works*. This was ſuch a deliverance, as it might reaſonably have been preſumed, there could be no danger it ſhould be ever forgot by them: It was ſuch a convincing and aſtoniſhing proof of the immediate preſence of God amongſt them, that 'tis not eaſy to imagine, how the deep impreſſions it muſt of neceſſity make upon their minds, of the Power and peculiar Providence of God over them, ſhould ever after come to be worn out. For there is nothing apt to affect men in ſo ſtrong and laſting a manner, as the beholding ſuch works, as they cannot but judge to be above the Power of natural cauſes, and to be the immediate effect of the finger of God. Yet we find that *That very* people, even *that very* generation, who had ſeen all theſe things with their own Eyes, (as *Moſes* often upbraided them;) *forgat God's works, and his wonders which he had ſhewed among them; They kept not the Covenant of God, but refuſed to walk in his law; They ſinned yet more againſt him, and provoked the moſt Higheſt in the wilderneſs*, Pſ. lxxviii. 17. How much more would the Memory of that great work have been loſt in *After*-generations, had not God appointed ſuch a memorial of it, as, by its conſtant return, and by its fitneſs to repreſent the thing ſignified, might always preſerve it freſh in their memories, and oblige them to *teach their Children the ſame*? For *This* cauſe therefore was the Feaſt of the *Paſſover* inſtituted; an inſtitution moſt proper for That End to which it was deſigned: Men, in ſuch a feſtival Solemnity, being conſtantly obliged to recollect and rehearſe particularly the Matter they gratefully commemorate; and by rejoicing together, with humble Devotion, to imprint it more and more deeply upon their minds for ever. And accordingly we find in the Hiſtories of All Nations, that ſomething like This was their uſual manner of keeping up in their Minds a Senſe of great and remarkable bleſſings; of preſerving the Memory of their moſt eminent Benefactors; and of making effectual the Laws and particular Precepts, ſuch Benefactors have thought fit ſhould be perpetually obſerved.

And now, This is the Method which God has been pleaſed to make uſe of with *Us Chriſtians* likewiſe. The Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt, (which is the Foundation of God's accepting Repentance, conſiſtently with the Honour of his divine Laws,) was ineſtimably the greateſt bleſſing that was ever conferred upon the Sons of Men; yea, the fountain and ſpring, the original and foundation of all other bleſſings: For ſo the Apoſtle juſtly argues, *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things*? It was a Bleſſing, of which the deliverance of the People out of *Egypt*, and their paſſage through the *Red Sea*, was but a Type and a Figure; And therefore, if that *Shadow* was to be ſo ſolemnly commemorated by the Paſſover, how much more does the *Subſtance itſelf* of this eternal Bleſſing, deſerve to be perpetually kept in mind with the higheſt veneration, and commemorated with the greateſt thankfulneſs, that can poſſibly be expreſſed. That This might be done the more effectually; our Saviour, in conſideration of the weakneſs of mens apprehenſions, and the ſlowneſs of their memories in ſpiritual matters, has thought fit to inſtitute *ſuch* ſymbols or repreſentations of what he has done and ſuffered for us, as might *beſt* conduce to the ſpiritual ends he deſigned in the Sacrament; that is, *ſuch* Symbols, as might repreſent him to our Minds rather than to our bodily ſenſes; and might aſſiſt the meditating faculties of the Soul; yet ſo, as at the ſame time not to affect the Senſes in ſuch manner as to give any occaſion to the outward actions to drown or thruſt out the ſpiritual affections of the mind; *ſuch* ſymbolical Repreſentations as might be naturally uſeful to excite Devotion; and yet at the ſame time not be apt to degenerate into occaſions of Superſtition. There is no corporeal *Image* (ſuch as vain and corrupt men are apt to affect, and have found the great miſchief of it;) there is no Object to *terminate* the Senſe; but the Bread is appointed to be broken, and the Wine to be

poured

SERM. LVI.

poured out; to remind us in an *abstract and spiritual* manner, how his Body was broken, and his Blood shed for us. And this he has commanded us to do *always*, in *remembrance of Him*; *showing forth the Lord's Death*, through all Generations, until his Second *Coming*.

We are to do it *at all times*; to show forth his Death, by a perpetual commemoration, until his second coming: But more *especially*, at the solemn return of those great Festivals, set apart in remembrance of his *Nativity*, *Passion*, and *Resurrection*. His *Birth* in human Flesh, was the humbling himself to a Capacity of suffering *Death* for our sakes; and his *Resurrection* after Death, was the evidence and demonstration, of his Sufferings being accepted in the sight of God. He *died for our Sins*, that he might expiate them by his Blood; *and he rose again for our justification*, that he might in his Glory communicate to us the full Effect and Fruit of that Atonement. He *offered himself* once *a Sacrifice for Sin*; and then *for ever sat down on the right hand of God*; *having by one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified*. But now in order to make ourselves capable of so inestimable a Benefit, it is necessary on *our* part, that we so commemorate *his* Death, as to die *ourselves* also unto Sin; and so to rejoice in *his* Resurrection, as to rise *ourselves* likewise, unto newness of life. *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*; *Therefore let* us *keep the feast*, *not with old leaven*, *neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness*, *but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*, 1 Cor. v. 7. To such as are sincerely and heartily desirous so to do, there can be no better Assistance than the frequent and worthy receiving this Holy Communion: The *general Nature*, *End and Design* of which, I have *Now* shown to be a solemn commemorating of the Death of Christ, (*Do this in remembrance of Me*;) and the *particulars* contained under this *general* Head, shall *hereafter* more fully be explained.

Let us therefore, with Hearts full of sincere Resolutions to forsake every Sin, partake of this Holy Feast in the Manner our Lord himself has appointed: And that it may have an effectual influence upon us to imitate him in his *Life*, whom otherwise we do but mock when we commemorate his *Death*; *God of his infinite mercy grant*, &c.

SERMON

SERMON LVII.

The Nature, End and Design of the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 25.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the new Testament in my Blood; This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

I HAVE from these Words, in a *foregoing* Discourse, considered the *general* Nature, End, and Design, of the Institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I proceed *at this time*, to reduce to Practice the *several particulars*, included in that *One general* direction given us by our Lord, *do this in Remembrance of Me*. SERM. LVII.

And 1*st*. *To do This in* remembrance *of Christ*, signifies *fixing and imprinting* in our minds with a more lasting and *permanent* Impression, the remembrance of his Death and Passion; as an effectual *Motive to universal Obedience*: That is, to the Practice of Virtue, upon the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ. There can be no stronger Argument, to perswade Men to the practice of Virtue and Holiness, than a due consideration of the exemplary *Life* and meritorious *Death* of our Saviour; His Life as a Pattern of all Virtue, and his Death as an Evidence of God's Hatred against Sin. His *Life* was so complete a *pattern* of pure Religion: and his

SERM. LVII.

Death ſo affectionate a *perſuaſive* to imitate That example; that whoſoever frequently and ſeriouſly meditates upon theſe things, can neither readily *err* from the right way, for want of due *inſtruction* and ſufficient *direction*; nor *faint* for want of powerful *Motives* to proceed in it. For, *What* temptation can prevail upon That perſon to ſin deliberately againſt God, to run into *any* Acts of Debauchery or Impiety; who by Faith continually beholds our Lord ſhedding his moſt precious Blood, to redeem him from the dominion and puniſhment of that Sin, which he is now tempted to commit? What Heart can be ſo obdurate, what Breaſt ſo ungrateful, as to run knowingly and willingly into the commiſſion of Sin; when he has his *dying* Saviour habitually before his eyes, intreating and beſeeching him to avoid thoſe Sins, which were the cauſe of his cruel and ignominious Death? In matters *of temporal* Concern, Men always endeavour to remember the inſtructions of a *dying* Friend; and think nothing more ſacredly obliges them, than his *laſt* and moſt affectionate Deſires: How much *more* religiouſly ought we to obſerve thoſe Precepts, which we find our *Saviour* injoyning us not only when *dying*, but when dying *for* our *ſakes*; when dying even *for that very end*, that he might enable us the more effectually to perform them! Now the *Means* to preſerve theſe Impreſſions conſtantly freſh upon our Minds, and in their full Force; is to partake frequently of thoſe elements, which our Lord himſelf has appointed to be received, as the moſt proper remembrances of himſelf. Whoſoever keeps up in his mind a conſtant remembrance of Chriſt, of what he has done and ſuffered for us, will not eaſily fall into groſs and habitual Sins: and he that frequently and devoutly, with underſtanding and knowledge of what he does, partakes of the Holy Communion, cannot fail to keep up in his Mind ſuch a conſtant Remembrance of our Lord. When we ſee the Bread broken, and the Wine poured out; we cannot but contemplate how his Body was broken, and his Blood ſhed for our ſakes; and the oftner we renew theſe thoughts by frequent communicating, the ſtronger and more vigorous, the deeper and more laſting impreſſions muſt theſe things neceſſarily make upon our Minds. One principal Reaſon why Men in theſe latter Ages of the World, who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, are yet ſo looſe and ſenſual, ſo careleſs and indifferent in matters of Religion, ſo cold and lifeleſs in their devotion, and ſo little affected with things ſpiritual and of a heavenly nature, is becauſe they ſeldom allow themſelves Time, from the Cares and Buſineſs and pleaſures of the World, to recollect their Thoughts; and meditate ſeriouſly upon the great Motives and Arguments of Religion: And one reaſon why they ſo ſeldom think on theſe Arguments, is, becauſe they neglect thoſe means, which God has graciouſly appointed to awaken and withdraw their Minds from earthly and temporal conſiderations; thoſe means, to which God has annexed the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to raiſe our Thoughts and fix our Meditations upon things ſpiritual and removed from Senſe. Hence it comes to paſs, that tho' they *believe* indeed the Hiſtory of Chriſt's dying for them, as a bare relation of Matter of Fact; yet they ſeldom remember or think at all upon it; or if they do, yet 'tis ſo ſlightly and ſuperficially, with ſo little due apprehenſion of the great concern and importance of it to themſelves, or of the true Deſign of it with regard to their own real Amendment; that it leaves upon their minds none of thoſe impreſſions, which are neceſſary in order to have an effectual influence upon their lives and actions. One great and principal End therefore of the inſtitution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is, by means of outward and viſible Signs, apt and decent, proper and ſignificant, to imprint and fix in our minds with a more laſting and permanent impreſſion, the remembrance of Chriſt's Death and Paſſion; that, having always before our Eyes thoſe admirable inſtances of his unparallelled Love, and being conſtantly reminded of the true End and Deſign of his Sufferings, we may be the more ſtrongly fortified againſt all temptations, that would ſeduce us to ſin againſt ſo great a Benefactor; and that we may go on the more effectually in the ways of *his* commandments, who has done and ſuffered for us things of ſo great and ſo ineſtimable a value.

2. *Doing this in remembrance of Chriſt*, is making *ſuch* a commemoration of his Death, as is with all Humility a continual *acknowledgment* of its being to *Sinners* the *only Ground of Hope and Aſſurance of Pardon*. *This Cup*, ſaith he, *is the New Teſtament*

Teſtament in my Blood, which is ſhed for You and for many for the Remiſſion of Sins; Therefore *do this in remembrance of me*. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not *it ſelf*, like Baptiſm, a Rite appointed for the Remiſſion of Sins; but 'tis a *commemoration* only of that All-ſufficient Sacrifice, which was *once* offered for an eternal Expiation. To imagine that the Lord's Supper, which is to be repeated *perpetually*, has ſuch a promiſe annexed to it of taking away all paſt Sins, as *Baptiſm* had, which was to be adminiſtred but *once*, is a dangerous and fatal Error; Becauſe ſuch an Opinion would be plainly an encouragement for Men to *continue in Sin*, that *the Grace* of Forgiveneſs *might* be perpetually repeated and *abound*. But the receiving *This* Sacrament is a continual *acknowledgment*, that *That* Pardon, which God vouchſafes us, not as a neceſſary conſequent of the outward Action, but upon the condition of our true and unfeigned Repentance; even that *That* Pardon, is the purchaſe of the Blood of Chriſt, and the Effect of that great and eternal Sacrifice, once offered for the Expiation of Sin. The Church of *Rome*, by pretending That ſacrifice to be perpetually repeated upon the Altar; as they give Men too great encouragement to continue in Sin, ſo they expreſly contradict the Apoſtle St. *Paul*; who aſſures us *Heb.* ix. 25, that Chriſt is not to *offer himſelf often, as the High Prieſt entered into the Holy place every year with blood of others; For then muſt he* often *have ſuffered ſince the foundation of the World; But now* Once *in the end of the World has he appeared to put away Sin, by the Sacrifice of himſelf*. The Sacramental *remembrance* of which great Propitiation, the antient Writers of the Church do indeed frequently ſtile, by a figurative expreſſion, *the unbloody Sacrifice*; But for that *very reaſon*, and by that *very expreſſion*, it is declared *not to be properly* itſelf *a Sacrifice*, but only a grateful *commemoration* of one; becauſe *without Blood*, as there is *no remiſſion*, ſo there is properly *no Sacrifice*. It is a Sacrifice, only in a *figurative* Senſe, and by way of alluſion; juſt in the ſame manner of ſpeaking, as *Chriſtians* are ſtiled in the *New Teſtament the Circumciſion made without hands*. Nevertheleſs, to *thoſe* who truly and ſincerely repent and amend; and who humbly and devoutly beg of God the pardon of their paſt and forſaken Sins, thro' the interceſſion of Chriſt; to *ſuch* perſons, tho' there is indeed no *new Sacrifice*, no *new Foundation of Remiſſion*; there is nevertheleſs ſufficient ground for hope and aſſurance of Pardon, in the merit of that one All-ſufficient Sacrifice Once offered for ever: And ſincere Penitents can never with more reaſonable and well-grounded Faith, hope to have applied to themſelves the benefit of the Grace and Forgiveneſs, purchaſed once for them by that great Expiation; than when they are with true Devotion and with full Purpoſe of Amendment of Life, commemorating their Saviour's ſufferings in that ſolemn manner, which *He himſelf* has appointed, *who* was the perſon that gave himſelf to be the reconciliation for us, that thro' him we might have acceſs with confidence to the throne of grace; and *whom* God *has ſet forth to be a propitiation for* us, *thro' Faith in his Blood; to declare his righteouſneſs*, (that is, his *mercy*; *for* ſo *the righteouſneſs of God* ſignifies in the *New Teſtament*;) to declare, I ſay, his righteouſneſs *for the remiſſion of Sins that are paſt, thro' the forbearance of God*. They can never with better and more lively Hope, expreſs their full Truſt and humble dependance upon God, that he ſhall *freely give* them *all* Other *things*; than at That Time when they are worthily and devoutly commemorating, according to our Lord's inſtitution, how *he ſpared not* even *his* own *Son, but delivered him up for us all*. How *ill* therefore does it become Men who call themſelves Chriſtians to neglect this ordinance with a careleſs indifferency; and upon ſlight pretences, to deprive themſelves of the benefit of ſo reaſonable a duty! The Blood of Chriſt, is, in the Scripture-language, *a fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanneſs*, that is, for Sin repented of, and utterly forſaken; and the benefit thereof is never more likely to be effectually applied, than when Men, with determined reſolutions of better Obedience, are diſpoſed to become worthy partakers of theſe Holy Myſteries.

3. *Doing this in remembrance of Chriſt*, is *declaring publickly* to the World our Faith in him; and endeavouring to *continue down* the Memory of his Love to *all generations*. Thus St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. xi. 26. in the words immediately following the Text, *As oft*, ſays he, *as ye eat this bread and drink this Cup, ye do* ſhow *the Lord's death till he come*. We here profeſs *publickly* our Faith in his Death; and declare ſolemnly to the World, that we expect remiſſion of our Sins, only thro' the

SERM. LVII.

the virtue of his blood ſhed for us. We commemorate his unſpeakable Love to Mankind; and extol and magnify in our Praiſes thoſe great Acts, which were the Effects of that ineſtimable love. We rehearſe and proclaim the benefits he has procured for us; and, as much as in us lies, *make known to all men* the glory of his Love and Power: *that one generation may praiſe his Works to another, and declare his mighty acts*; that *men* may *ſpeak of the glorious honour of his Majeſty, and of his wondrous works.*

In the inſtitution of the Paſſover, when the *children of Iſrael were commanded to eat unleavened bread ſeven days*, in remembrance of their deliverance out *of Egypt*; 'tis expreſly added in the command, that they ſhould Declare or tell forth unto their children the mercy of that deliverance: *Thou ſhalt* ſhow thy *Son in that day, ſaying, This is done becauſe of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt: And it ſhall be a Sign unto thee upon thine Hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Law of the Lord may be in thy mouth; for, with a ſtrong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt*, Exod. xiii. 8. Hence they called the Paſchal Leſſon *the Annuntiating* or *Declaring*; Which is a word exactly anſwering to St. *Paul*'s expreſſion *of ſhewing forth*, or declaring, the *Lord's Death 'till he come.* To communicate therefore *in remembrance of* Chriſt, is to *declare publickly*, and keep up amongſt Men the memory of his Death, and of the ineſtimable benefits purchaſed for us thereby: 'Tis to teſtify our firm belief of the virtue and efficacy of that great Sacrifice; and to profeſs ourſelves publickly in the number of thoſe, who, by partaking of the Feaſt inſtituted in *Remembrance* of the Sacrifice, expect to be made partakers of the Sacrifice *itſelf.*

4. To *do this in remembrance of Chriſt*, implies, that with the greateſt *joy*, and higheſt expreſſions of *gratitude*, we return *Thanks* to God for his unſpeakable Mercy, in ſending into the World his Son, the Son of his *Love*, out of his Boſom, for the redemption of mankind. It was a precept in the Law of *Moſes*, Deut. xvi. 11. *Thou ſhalt* rejoice *in thy feaſts before the Lord.* And particularly in the Paſchal Supper, beſides the uſual Forms of Bleſſing and Thankſgiving, they ſung a peculiar Hymn, in memory of their deliverance out of the Land *of Egypt.* In compliance with which cuſtom we find it recorded by two of the Evangeliſts, that our Saviour and his Diſciples, immediately after the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, ſung an *Hymn* of Praiſe unto God; probably the *ſame*, or *part of* That Hymn which the *Jews* uſed to ſing after the Paſchal Supper; *Their* deliverance from the *Egyptians*, being a type *of our* deliverance from the power and dominion of Sin; and the Thankſgiving proper upon *That* occaſion, being much *more* emphatically applicable to *This.* Beſides; in the inſtitution itſelf, the Evangeliſt takes notice, that when our Saviour took the Bread, he *gave Thanks*, or Bleſſed and Praiſed God; Whence the *whole Action* is uſually called the *Euchariſt*, that is, the Solemn *Thankſgiving*; and, by St. *Paul*, *the Cup of Bleſſing which we bleſs*, or, as the word may no leſs properly be rendered, *the Cup of Praiſe and Thankſgiving.* The ſame is alſo obſervable in St. *Luke*'s deſcription of the Practice of the moſt primitive Chriſtians; *Acts* ii. 46, *And they continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from houſe to houſe*, (in *the houſe*, the words ſhould be tranſlated; *i. e.* in the place of their religious aſſemblies;) *did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart*; Praiſing *God, and having favour with all the people.* Frequent Forms of Praiſe and Thankſgiving upon this occaſion, we meet with in the moſt ancient Chriſtian Writers; and none more affectionate than That we ſtill make uſe of; *We praiſe thee, we bleſs thee, we worſhip thee; we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great Glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty, We give thanks to thee for thy great Glory*; i. e. for the wonderful *manifeſtation* of thy Glory and Power, thy Mercy and Goodneſs towards Mankind, in *ſending* thine own Son to die for our Sins, and to *give himſelf* a ranſom and propitiation for Sinners.

This reconciliation of Penitent Sinners to God by the Death of his Son is the Higheſt Inſtance of Love and Goodneſs, that was ever ſhown to Mankind: For, ſcarcely for a *righteous* man, ſaith St. *Paul*, will one die: But *God* commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet *Sinners*, Chriſt died for us, *Rom.* v. 7. God could in a moment have deſtroyed the whole race of Sinners; and as St. *John Baptiſt* affectionately expreſſes it, *was able out of the Stones to have raiſed up Children unto Abraham.* But *he turned away his wrath from them, and ſuffered not his*

SERM. LVII.

his whole displeasure to arise. Wherefore, *if* at *all* times we are bound to return Thanks to God for *all* his mercies, for the Mercies *of* every *day*, and *of* every *hour*; with how much *greater* earnestness and stronger affection, ought we to express the same thankful disposition of mind, when we are commemorating *That* mercy, which is not only the greatest of all others, but the Fountain also and Foundation of them all? and how zealous ought we to be of expressing our thankfulness to him by suitable *Obedience*? when the consideration of the *first* mercy, that *he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, gives reason to hope, that, if we behave ourselves in any measure worthy of so great a Salvation, much more *shall he with Him also freely give us all things?* and that *if, while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us; much more, being now justifyed by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him? For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life*, Rom. v. 2. Wherefore let us say with the Holy Psalmist, *Ps.* cxvi. 12, 13, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he has done unto me? I will receive the cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord.* And *Ps.* ciii. 1, *Praise the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy Name; Praise the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his benefits; Who forgiveth all thy Sin, and healeth all thine infirmities; Who saveth thy Life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness.* There is no possibility, but he who duly contemplates the unspeakable love of Christ, in giving himself freely to *bear our Sins himself in his own body on the tree*, and seriously meditates on the original and essential Goodness of God, which first moved and disposed him to *find out* this method of recovery for us; must wish he had the tongues *of Men and Angels*, to show forth the praises *of him that* has *loved us*, and sent his Son to *wash us from our Sins in his own blood, and* to *make us Kings and Priests unto God even his Father, to whom be glory and dominion for ever.*

5. *Doing this in remembrance of Christ*, implies on *our* part a *confirming of* our *Covenant* with God, a thankful *acceptance of* those *Conditions* of Pardon he has offered us in the Gospel, and an *acknowledging* and *renewing* our Obligations to obey him. *This Cup*, says our Saviour, *is the new Testament*, or (as the Word equally signifies) *the new* Covenant, *in my Blood:* Now *every Covenant*, in the Nature of the thing, supposes *conditions* to be performed on either part. God has commanded Repentance and Remission of Sins to be preached to all Nations in the Name of Christ; and the condition on *his* part of the Covenant, the remission of Sins, is always ready to be verified; if we fail not in *our* part, of having worthily repented, and reformed our Lives. But if we continue in our Sins; the Commemoration *of the Death of* Christ can do us no service, where the Effect of his *Death itself* takes no place: The partaking of this *Feast in* remembrance *of the Sacrifice*, can be of no benefit to us, when we have no part nor lot in the *Sacrifice itself.* The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not properly an *Expiation of* Sin, even to those who *truly repent*; but only a *thankful* remembrance of that great Atonement, by virtue of which our Repentance is made acceptable: Much less, can it be of any efficacy, or power to do away such *Sins*, as are *never forsaken.* Religion is no way capable of a greater corruption, nor can *any* Superstition be of more destructive consequence, than to make *That* Ordinance an easy method of obtaining *perpetual* Pardon of repeated Transgressions, which in reality was intended to remind us continually, that the Pardon of Sin could not *at all* be obtained, but by the shedding the precious blood of the Son of God.

There are many pious and religious persons, who, on the *other* hand, are unreasonably *scrupulous*; and notwithstanding their sincere Endeavours to obey God's commandments, still *fear, where no fear is:* But, as such persons have all the reason in the world to rest satisfied, that the general course of a virtuous and religious life, is an abundant security against the danger *of not discerning the Lord's body:* so, on the contrary, *vicious* persons ought to be well assured, that there is *no external* part whatsoever of religious worship, by which they can receive *any* benefit, without actual amendment and reformation of life. The Arguments of Religion are strong and powerful, to invite them to Repentance; The gracious Motions of the Spirit of God are ready to assist and strengthen their sincere endeavours; and especially, where it finds them with seriousness attending his holy Ordinances:

SERM. LVII.

But their Obedience to *this one* commandment of Christ must be with an intention of obeying *the rest*, and not with a design to supply that Neglect. He that *does* this worthily in *Remembrance of Christ*, must mean to express his gratitude to God for the Death of his Son, by *such* a Repentance, as the Death of Christ has enabled and obliged him to make perfect. He must *so* commemorate the Love of his Saviour, as thereby to excite in himself a suitable return of Love to him that died for him; and our *Love* to Christ, the Scripture tells us, *is This*, that we *keep his Commandments*. We must *show forth the Lord's Death till he come*, by *so* dying *ourselves* unto Sin, as to declare evidently to the World, that we have a well-grounded Hope, of being made like him also in his *Resurrection*. We must consider, that when the Blood of Christ is stiled in the prophetick language, a *fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanness*; the Meaning is, (as St. *Paul* explains it,) *for the forgiveness of Sins that are* past, not for our encouragement to continue in them for the time *to come*. We must remember that we *are bought with a* price, and *therefore* must *glorify God in our Body and in our Spirit, which are God's*; *Knowing that* we *were redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot*. We must with firm and effectual resolutions of future Obedience, *offer and present ourselves, our Souls and Bodies, a reasonable, holy, and lively Sacrifice unto God*; as often as we commemorate that great Sacrifice, which was once offered for us in the Death of his Son. Otherwise, instead *of doing this in* remembrance *of Christ*, we shall be found to do it in *Contempt* of him; *accounting the blood of the Covenant, wherewith* we ought to be *sanctified, an unholy thing*; *denying the Lord* who *bought* us with the precious blood of his dear Son; *and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace*.

Lastly, *Doing this in remembrance of Christ*, is a Profession of our *Communion* one with another, and a strong Obligation to mutual *Love, Charity, and Good-will*. This is a Subject much insisted on by St. *Paul* in this whole Epistle, and particularly in this chapter, and in this very Argument, of which the Text is a part; and therefore deserves to be discoursed upon more largely.

SERMON

SERMON LVIII.

The Nature, End and Design of the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 25, latter part.

——— *This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

THE due Observance of this Precept of our Saviour, *Do this in remembrance of Me*, I have shown to imply the following particulars. SERM. LVIII.

1. A *fixing and imprinting* in our minds more lastingly, the remembrance of his Death and Passion; as a *Motive to Obedience*.

2. A Commemorating his Death in an humble *Acknowledgment*, of its being the *only Ground of our Hope of Pardon*.

3. A *declaring publickly* to the World, our Faith in him; and endeavouring to *continue down* the Memory of his Love to *all generations*.

4. A returning *Thanks* to God with the greatest *Joy*, and highest expressions of Gratitude, for his unspeakable *Mercy* in sending his Son into the World for the *redemption of Mankind*.

5. A

SERM. LVIII.

5. A *confirming* on *our* part, our Covenant with God; a thankful *acceptance* of those conditions of Pardon he has offered us; and an *acknowledging* and *renewing* our Obligations to obey him.

And these I have *already* discoursed upon.

Lastly, (and to conclude what I have to offer on this Head;) *Doing this in remembrance of Christ*, is a Profession of our *Communion* one with another, and a strong Obligation to mutual *Love, Charity and Good-will.*

A Principal part of the design of this *whole* 1st Epistle of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians*, is to show the Necessity of Love and Unity among Christians; and all that he discourses particularly in the 10th and 11th chapters concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is chiefly with intent to draw Arguments from the nature and design of that Holy Institution, to show the unreasonableness and unchristianness of Animosities and Divisions among themselves. With *This* he begins the Epistle, ch. i. ver. 10. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* His meaning is not, that Christians are bound to *be*, or to *pretend* to be, in all things of the same opinion. For to *be* so, is *impossible*; and to *pretend* to be so, is *hypocrisy*. But his meaning is, that *notwithstanding* all such differences of opinion, as are absolutely unavoidable, yet, by mutual forbearance, meekness and charity, they should be as free from strife and contention, as if they were really in all respects of One Mind. *This* exhortation, he carries on thro' the whole Body of his Discourse, ch. iii. ver. 3. *Whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* To *This*, all his discourse concerning the Communion, ch. x. has respect; *For, we being many, are one Bread and one Body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread*, ver. 17. With regard to *This* more especially it is, that in the xith chapter he passes so severe a censure on those who *eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily.* For so he introduces his discourse, ver. 18. a little before the Text; *First of all, when ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it.* And by the help of this observation, the connexion of the Apostle's discourse in these two chapters will appear very easy, which otherwise may seem somewhat difficult to be understood. In the tenth chapter, the divisions referred to, are such as arose among the *Corinthians* upon the question concerning the lawfulness of eating things offered unto Idols. That an *Idol* was nothing in the World, and that the good creatures of *God* could receive no defilement from the vanity and superstition of *men*, the Apostle knew and plainly enough declared: But lest Offence should be given to weaker brethren, who could not so clearly distinguish; he exhorts them to forbear joining themselves with such assemblies of *Gentiles*, as might make them seem (at least to the weaker brethren) to be partakers of the Heathen Idolatry. For, *saith he* in *like manner as* a man's receiving the communion with *Christians*, is a publick declaration of his being a Christian himself; and *as* a Man's partaking of the Sacrifices at the Altars of the *Israelites*, is openly professing himself to be a *Jew* by religion; *so*, for a Christian to eat of things sacrificed to *Idols*, tho' he *has* in himself that knowledge that an Idol is nothing in the World, yet may by others be interpreted as if he joined with them in their idolatry. This is plainly the true connexion of the Apostle's discourse; ver. 14, &c. *My dearly beloved, flee from Idolatry: I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say*, i. e. judge and observe, while I explain this to you by an easy comparison: *The Cup of blessing which We* Christians *bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? The Bread which We break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?* that is; Is it not a publick declaration of our *mutual agreement* and *fellowship*, in commemorating *together* the love of our *common* Saviour? (*For we being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread;*) And in like manner, says he, continuing the same similitude, Israel *after the flesh*; *are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the Altar?* i. e. Are they not partakers of the *Jewish* religion? do they not thereby profess their Communion with *Them? So* also, *the things which the* Gentiles *sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.* The Words are not abrupt and incoherent exhortations, as (without carefully attending to the design of

of the Apoſtle's argument,) they at firſt Sight may ſeem to be; but they are directly connected with what went before, and are clearly a continuation of one and the ſame ſimilitude; that, as among both *Jews* and *Chriſtians* the partaking in the ſame ſolemn religious acts, is a declaration of Unity, communion and agreement; *ſo* to eat with *Heathens* of things ſacrificed to Idols, would be an affording too great a ground of ſuſpicion, of agreeing with them in their Idolatry. In the *following* chapter, the diviſions referred to, are of another kind; namely, ſuch as aroſe in the Church, upon occaſion of the *rich* deſpiſing the *poor*, and not allowing them to partake equally in their religious feſtival. This was their *eating and drinking unworthily*; This was their *not diſcerning the Lord's Body*: They did not ſufficiently diſcern and diſtinguiſh, at leaſt they did not act as if they were ſenſible, that this ſolemn act of Religion was eſſentially a ſtrong and indiſpenſable Obligation, to mutual Love, Unity, and Charity. To remedy this diſorder therefore, the Apoſtle thought no Argument could be more proper and powerful, than to repeat to them at large the hiſtory of our Saviour's inſtituting his laſt Supper. He thought it was not poſſible, if they worthily remembred their *common Lord*, that they could be ſo forgetful of their *Duty one towards another*.

In *Both* theſe paſſages therefore, he ſuppoſes (what I am *now* inſiſting upon,) that commemorating of Chriſt in the manner he himſelf has appointed, is a Profeſſion of our *Communion* one with another, and a ſtrong Obligation to mutual Love, Charity and Good-will. *The Cup of Bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Chriſt? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Chriſt?* For, ſaith he, *we being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread*; ch. x. ver. 17. And he *therefore* declares, ch. xi. ver. 20. that *when* the Corinthians *came together into one place, this* was *not to eat the Lord's Supper*; becauſe, ſaith he, *I hear that there be diviſions among you, and I partly believe it*. One great part of the Deſign of the Goſpel of Chriſt, was to eſtabliſh a Religion, which, as it might teach us how to be *reconciled* to *God*, ſo it might *reconcile* us likewiſe unto *one another*: which, as it was to oblige us to *love the* Lord our God *with all our Heart*, ſo to *love our* Neighbours *alſo as ourſelves*. *By This ſhall all men know*, ſaith our Saviour, *that ye are my diſciples, if ye have Love one to another*, St. Joh. xiii. 35. To *This* the very Nature and Conſtitution of the univerſal Church of Chriſt, the very Notion of its being a Body whereof Chriſt is the Head, does itſelf naturally lead and direct us; *For, as* (in the literal ſenſe) *we have many members in one body*, ſaith St. *Paul*; *ſo* (in the *ſpiritual* ſenſe likewiſe) We *being many are one Body in Chriſt, every one Members one of another*, Rom. xii. 4, 5. To *This*, the due conſideration of *every part* of the Chriſtian inſtitution will have a powerful influence to oblige us; Let us *endeavour*, as the ſame Apoſtle expreſly argues, *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*; For, ſays he, *there is One Body and One Spirit, even as ye are called in One hope of your calling; One Lord, One Faith, One Baptiſm, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*, Eph. iv. 3. And ver. 15. *Speak the truth in Love*, that ye *may grow up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Chriſt; From whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, making increaſe of the Body, unto the edifying of itſelf in Love*. Through the Wickedneſs of *Men* indeed, and by the Fraud of the *Devil*; thro' falſe Notions of the great *End* and *Deſign* of Religion; through unchriſtian contentiouſneſs, and more eager Zeal for the imaginations of *Men*, than for the commands of *God*; this Body of Chriſt, this one univerſal Church, intended by our Lord to have been ſpread uniformly over all the Earth; has been for many Ages divided by many Parties, and into numerous Factions. But, as we all believe in the ſame God and Father of all, as we are all redeemed by the ſame *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, as we are all baptized into the profeſſion of the ſame *Creed*, (the Apoſtles *Form of Sound words*,) and are all partakers of the ſame *Communion* at the Table of our Lord; ſo by this one unchangeable and fundamental Root of Unity, ought we to uſe our utmoſt endeavours to *hold* faſt *the Head, from which all the Body by joints and bands having nouriſhment miniſtred, and knit together, increaſes with the increaſe of God*, Col. ii. 19.

SERM. LVIII.

And as this great Duty of mutual Love and Charity, is thus inforced upon us by the *general* Design and Tendency, by the *whole Tenor* of the Gospel; so is it still *more particularly* and *most strongly*, by the Example of that unparallelled instance of amazing Love, the Death of Christ for our sakes, which we profess to commemorate as often as we communicate at his Holy Table: Where 'tis not possible for us to approach with Hearts duly sensible of, and worthily affected with, the Greatness of the Love of Christ towards us; but it must at the same time excite in us a disposition to *imitate* him, according to the proportion of our Abilities; and to express our Gratitude to *him*, by following that Example of loving and doing good to *our brethren*, which he has in so eminent a manner set before us. 'Tis particularly taken notice of by St. *Luke*, that the primitive Disciples, as they continued stedfast in the Apostles doctrine and in breaking of bread and in prayer, so they did all things unanimously, *with one accord*, *Acts* ii. 46, with mutual Love, Charity and Good-will. Our Lord himself, in that last and most affectionate Discourse, which he made to his Disciples a little before his Death, at the time of his instituting the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, insists upon This, as the thing of all others the most acceptable to him, and most desired by him: *This is* my *commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you*, St. *Joh.* xv. 12; and ch. xiii. 34, *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another*; even *as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*. And the Apostle St. *John*, who leaned upon his Master's Breast, and seems in a particular manner to have been partaker of his kind and loving Spirit, the Spirit of meekness, gentleness, and goodness; presses this Duty accordingly, with a like earnestness: *Herein*, says he, *is Love; not that we loved God, but that he loved Us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our Sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, We ought also to love one another*, 1 Joh. iv. 10; And ch. iii. 16, *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he* (because Christ) *laid down his life for us; and* We *ought to lay down our lives for the Brethren:* To *lay down our lives* for them; *i. e.* to love them, comparatively speaking, even as our own Lives; to love them as ourselves; to do every thing that is in our Power reasonably, for their benefit and advantage. *This* is the true Spirit of Christianity; *This* is the full and proper Effect of the Gospel of Christ: By *This* we are to judge of ourselves, whether we be truly and indeed his Disciples, and have made any considerable progress and improvement in his religion. And By *This* we are in a more especial manner to examine ourselves, whether we be duly qualified, to be made worthy partakers of *his* Body and Blood, who died for this end, that as he might reconcile us to *God*, so he might *also* reconcile us to *each other*. And indeed in *other* particulars, men are not so very apt to mistake. There is *no Man* who approaches the Lord's Table with *any* Reverence, with *any* Sense of Religion upon his Mind; but is desirous at that time, to strengthen his *Faith* in *God*, to express his *Gratitude* to his Saviour, to obtain *Pardon* of his past and forsaken Sins through the Merits of *his* Blood who loved us and gave himself for us, and to make solemn resolutions of perfecting his *Repentance* and renewing his *Obedience* towards *God*: There is no man, I say, who has *any* Sense *at all* of Religion upon his Mind, but must needs come affected with such Thoughts and Intentions as these: But in the matter of mutual Love and Good-will towards *each other*; in the exercise of Christian Charity and universal Benevolence; in that readiness to forgive offences, to overlook little provocations, to promote speedy reconciliation, which the Gospel requires and insists upon as of so great importance; in *This* we are very apt to be careless and defective; and to imagine that external zeal in devotion towards *God*, may compensate for the want of real Charity and doing good to our *Brother*. For, notwithstanding *all* the unreasonable Heats and Animosities among Christians, *all* the useless and contentious disputes, *all* the peevish and needless provocations, *all* that difficulty of forgiving and being reconciled to each other, which is so obvious to observe in the World; yet how *few* do we find, whose *Consciences* are apt to be affected with *these* things? whose scruples concerning their own unworthiness to communicate, are founded upon *these* considerations? And yet 'tis very evident, that to be *in love and charity with our* Neighbours, (*i. e.* with *all mankind*, as far as is possible in that infinite

nite variety of different circumſtances,) is no leſs neceſſary a Qualification for communicating worthily, than 'tis neceſſary that we *truly and earneſtly repent* us of our Sins committed more immediately againſt *God*. 'Tis as evident that the deſign of our Saviour's inſtituting the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, was to be a declaration of our Communion *one with another*; a declaring, that, according to the Apoſtle's expreſſion, *we, being many, are one Bread and one Body*, ſignified by our being *all partakers of that one Bread*; as that it was intended to be a Profeſſion of our Communion with *Him*; a profeſſing, that *the Bread which we break, is the Communion of his Body*; and *the Cup which we bleſs, the Communion of his Blood*. 'Tis no leſs evident, that the Connexion and Sympathy of the Members one *with another*, is neceſſary to the Life and Preſervation of the Body; than that the Union of them all with the *Head*, and their common dependence upon it, is neceſſary to the ſame End. Our Saviour, in all his diſcourſes, lays ſo great and remarkable a ſtreſs upon *This* duty; as if therein conſiſted almoſt the *whole* of Religion: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, is *the firſt and great commandment*, the beginning and foundation of all Religion; *and the ſecond*, ſaith he, *is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*. SERM. LVIII.

The particular *Expreſſions*, or *manners*, *of ſhewing forth* which Love, moſt earneſtly and peculiarly inſiſted upon in Scripture, are theſe two. *1ſt*, A willingneſs to forgive injuries and offences; and *2dly*, A readineſs to ſhew mercy to the poor. *1ſt*, A willingneſs to forgive injuries and offences, is particularly recommended to us by the *Example*, as well as injoined by the *Commandment* of our Lord: The *whole* Chriſtian diſpenſation, the *general* grace and mercy of the Goſpel, the *great* pardon purchaſed by the Death of Chriſt, whereof the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a perpetual ſolemn commemoration; being entirely founded in God's gracious readineſs, for Chriſt's ſake, to forgive *Us*; and being no leſs *intended* to be ſet before us as an *Example* to imitate, than as an ineſtimable *Bleſſing* to be received with all poſſible Thankfulneſs. For which reaſon, that great and original Grace of God in the Goſpel, the Remiſſion of Sins ſet forth even in Baptiſm itſelf, ſeems by our Lord to be *reverſed* upon failure of this *condition* of *our forgiving one another*; in that Parable wherein he compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a certain *King*, who having forgiven one of his Servants a debt of ten thouſand talents, yet afterwards, when that ſervant refuſed to forgive one of his fellow-ſervants an hundred pence, the King *was wroth* with him again, *and delivered him to the Tormentors, till he ſhould pay all that was due unto him*; ſaying unto him, *O thou wicked ſervant, I forgave thee all that debt, becauſe thou deſiredſt me: Shouldeſt not Thou alſo have had compaſſion on thy fellow-ſervant, even as I had pity on thee?* Which our Saviour thus applies to *Us* in the concluſion of the Parable; *So likewiſe*, ſays he, *ſhall my heavenly Father do alſo unto you, if ye from you hearts forgive not every one his Brother their traſpaſſes*, St. *Matt.* xviii. 35. (He does not mean *Publick Malefactors*: For this would deſtroy all Government: Neither are ſuch ſtiled *Brethren*: But, forgive every one his *Brother* their *private* Offences, and be reconciled upon reaſonable and eaſy Terms: This is the Meaning of the *Parable*.) And in that Form of Prayer, which our Saviour was pleaſed to teach his Diſciples for perpetual Uſe, he ſo interpoſes the acknowledgment of our Obligation to this Duty; that every man, even in his *daily Prayer*, is obliged to declare himſelf unworthy of Pardon, and to have forfeited all title to the forgiveneſs of *God*, for his *own* Sins; if at the ſame time he is not willing and ready, upon the moſt *reaſonable* terms, to forgive all his *Brother*'s treſpaſſes and offences againſt *him*. How much *more*, at that moſt ſolemn commemoration of the Death of Chriſt in the Sacrament; when we are acknowledging in the moſt publick manner, all our hopes of Salvation, all our expectation of Pardon, to be owing to that free and undeſerved Goodneſs of God, which ſent his Son to die for us, and to obtain remiſſion of Sin; How much more (I ſay) at *That* time, muſt the very Nature of the Duty we are performing, the Solemnity of our confeſſing our own Unworthineſs, the publickneſs of our acknowledging the freeneſs of God's Goodneſs to us in forgiving

SERM. LVIII.

forgiving us through Christ our ten thousand talents; of necessity remind us, how absolutely fit and reasonable and indispensable it is, that we should be very willing to forgive each other our hundred pence! Even *so* necessary does our Lord make it, that he advises a man, if he has *brought his gift to the altar, and there remembers that his Brother has ought against him*; he advises him *to leave there his gift before the altar, and go his way, first be reconciled to his Brother, and then come and offer his gift*. St. *Matt*. v. 23. He makes it, not indeed of *more* importance, than offering his gift; as if it might be an excuse for neglecting *That*; but he declares it to be of so *much* importance, that the Gift or Service is not acceptable to *God*, without the foregoing reconciliation with *Man*. The Apostles likewise are perpetually urging this Argument, upon the same ground: *Col*. iii. 13. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*. And again; *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you*, Eph. iv. 32; and in the following chapter, ver. 2, *Walk in Love, as Christ also has loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour*. 'Tis *impossible* that any man who considers these exhortations, and has a just Sense of his own unworthiness, and of the Goodness of God, and of the great Remission purchased for him by the Death of Christ, of which he hopes to partake in attending with a fit disposition of Mind upon the ordinances of Divine appointment; 'tis *impossible* that any man, with *These* thoughts about him, can continue peevish and contentious, merciless and uncharitable, easy to be provoked, and difficult to be reconciled. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper therefore, so far as 'tis a memorial of the Death of Christ, of his Love towards us, and of his purchasing forgiveness for us; so far 'tis a most strong and powerful Argument, to oblige us to *mutual* Love, Charity and Good-will; to Forgiveness, Gentleness, and Easiness to be reconciled. And yet even *This* also, ought not to be made a Matter of Scruple and groundless Doubts, as if no man could be a worthy Communicant without being in actual Agreement with all Mankind. But 'tis to be understood only as an *Argument* of Duty, within its just bounds and proper limitations: For 'tis by no means impossible but Controversies concerning mens Rights and Properties *may* arise, even among *good* Christians; nay, 'tis not possible, in the present state of human Nature, but they *will* sometimes arise: And our Saviour must not be understood to forbid us making use of *such* means, for the preservation of our just rights, and for preventing the increase of injuries, as the Laws of Wise and Christian Countries, and the Usages of good and pious men direct us to make use of. But the intent of what has been said, is; that the consideration of the Death of Christ, of his great Love and Forgiveness to us, which we solemnly commemorate in the Holy Sacrament, cannot fail to dispose us, if we partake thereof worthily, to be very *willing* and *ready* upon the most *reasonable* terms, to forgive Injuries and Offences; to be difficult to be provoked, easy to be reconciled, apt to interpret things in the best manner; rather to recede somewhat from our right, than exceed in insisting upon more; and, if at any time we are unavoidably engaged in controversy about our Just Rights, yet never to carry it further than is absolutely necessary for the Preservation of Peace and Order and good Government in the World, as becomes the Society or Communion of Christians. 2*dly*, The other branch of that Love and Charity, to which (I said) the commemoration of the Death of Christ obliges us, is a ready disposition to shew mercy to the *Poor*. The Primitive Christians, as they always celebrated the Praises of God, upon this solemn occasion, with the greatest zeal and earnestness of affection, *with gladness and singleness of Heart*, Acts ii. 46; so they as constantly expressed this their joy and thankfulness, by liberal contributions, to relieve the necessities of the poorer Saints. Which custom is, with great reason, continued to this day. And indeed 'tis very natural, when we seriously meditate on the stupendous love of Christ, in *giving himself freely* a Sacrifice for us, and *his own self bearing our Sins in his own body on the tree*; 'tis very natural, (since we cannot make any return to *him*,) that we should desire to express our gratitude

in

in that way, which he is pleaſed to accept; as done immediately to himſelf; that is, in ſhowing mercy and charity to the Poor. That *Their* hearts being rejoiced with *our* Bounty, may zealouſly join with us in ſending up praiſes and thankſgivings to our common Father; and *that, abounding to every good work, we may be enriched in every thing to all bountifulneſs, which cauſeth through us thankſgiving to God. For the adminiſtration of this Service* (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, 2 *Cor.* ix. 12.) *not only ſupplieth the wants of the Saints, but is abundant alſo by many thankſgivings unto God; While by the experiment of this miniſtration, they glorify God for your profeſt Subjection unto the goſpel of Chriſt, and for your liberal diſtribution unto Them and unto all men.* SERM. LVIII.

SERMON LIX.

The Nature, End and Design of the Holy Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 27.

Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

SERM. LIX.

I HAVE lately, from our Saviour's words of institution, (*This do in remembrance of Me,*) discoursed concerning the *Nature, End, and Design,* of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I shall now from these words of St. *Paul,* proceed to some other considerations, necessary to be understood, in order to our partaking worthily of that Holy Sacrament: *Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.* Which words do plainly suppose in them, 1*st*, *A Duty enjoined*; to *eat this bread and drink this cup*: 2*dly*, A *Benefit arising from the due performance of the duty*; implied in the contrary danger of doing it unworthily. 3*dly*, *A certain Care and Preparation necessary*, in order to perform it worthily; lest by negligence and want of Devotion, we become *guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.* In the following discourse therefore, I shall briefly consider, 1*st*, The *Obligation* we lie under to

to perform the Duty enjoined. 2*dly*, What *Benefits* we may expect to be made partakers of, by performing it in a due and worthy manner. 3*dly*, What *Qualifications or Preparation* is necessary, in order to such a due and worthy receiving. In which Matter, because Men have sometimes on the one hand, been perplexed with many and unreasonable scruples, as well as on the other hand been too negligent and void of Devotion; I shall therefore in the 4*th* place consider the groundlessness and vanity of the greatest part of those Reasons, which men usually alledge for their abstaining from the Communion, under pretence of Want of due Preparation. And *Lastly*, I shall conclude what I think proper to offer to your meditations upon this Subject, with taking notice of some of the great and scandalous Corruptions, wherewith the Church of *Rome* have dishonoured this solemn commemoration of our Lord, and of his dying for us.

1. I am to consider what *Obligation* lies upon us to perform this Duty at all. And upon *This* Head there needs little inlargement; it being acknowledged by Christians *of all* Communions, (excepting perhaps *One only* Sect,) to be the express and positive commandment of our Lord. So that tho' we *could not* have understood so much of the reasonableness and usefulness of the precept, as we do; tho' we could not have perceived distinctly, the Benefits that we receive thereby; nor have at all apprehended the particular grounds and reasons of the fitness of the command; (which *Now* is by no means the case;) yet the clearness and expressness of the injunction itself, would nevertheless have made the Obligation sufficiently evident; and it would well have becomed us, without further enquiry, to have submitted with all Humility to the Will and Authority of our Lord. *Take, eat*; and, *Drink ye all of this*; and, *This do in remembrance of me*; are words containing as clear and express a command, as are any where to be met with, upon any other occasion in the whole New Testament: and they are recorded by three of the four Evangelists. And they are repeated by St. *Paul*, in the Words a little before the Text, as a commandment enforced distinctly, by a new and particular Revelation to himself; *I have received*, saith he, *of the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come, I have received of the Lord*; that is, he received it, not by tradition from those who were before him, but by immediate Revelation from Christ himself. For so he expressly assures us, concerning the manner of his own instruction in all the Precepts of the Gospel: *Gal.* i. 16, 17, 18, *I conferred not*, saith he, *with Flesh, and Blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me;* ——— *neither received I it of man, neither was I taught it; but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* This added singular Weight and Authority to *all* St. *Paul*'s admonitions and exhortations; and it made his reproof to the *Corinthians*, (in *this particular* instance of their unworthily receiving the Holy Communion,) to be doubly powerful and effectual: because it was in the case of their neglecting so *express* a Command, not only delivered to them at the first preaching of the Gospel, but *received* also by St. *Paul* with particular inforcement, in a new Revelation from *the Lord* himself. And suitable to the expressness and importance of the *Command*, is the account the Scripture gives us of the *Practice* of the primitive Disciples: *Acts* ii. 42, 46. *They continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer; And continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house*, they *eat their meat with gladness and singleness of Heart.* In which account is remarkable, not only their observance of the Duty, but the *constancy* also and *frequency* of their doing it; They continued *stedfastly* in the Apostles doctrine, and were *daily* in the Temple, breaking bread with one accord. Which *frequency* of Communicating, (tho' not as to the precise *Time* indeed; yet in general the doing it *frequently*) is plainly *implied* to be our Duty, and *supposed* in those words of our Saviour; *Do this*, as oft as *ye drink it, in remembrance of me*, 1 Cor. xi. 25. and in those of St. *Paul*, As oft as *ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew*

SERM. LIX.

ſhew the Lord's death till he come. And indeed, if there *could* be *any difference* in the degree of the Obligation of our Lord's commands, (I mean, of *ſuch* commands as are not moral and eternal, but of a poſitive nature only;) it would be natural almoſt to lay the *greateſt* ſtreſs, upon *that* which he gave us *a little before his death*; upon *that* which he commanded us to *do* particularly *in remembrance of him*; upon *that* which he commanded us to do in remembrance of the *greateſt inſtance of Love and Compaſſion*, that ever was in the World. For, *Greater love has no man than this, will that a man lay down his life for his* Friend; But our Lord refuſed not to die for *Us*, while we were yet *Enemies*. And *ſcarcely for a* righteous *man*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *will one* dare to *die*; *But* God *commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet* Sinners, *Chriſt died for Us*, Rom. v. 8. The Meaning is: God was never, in point of *Juſtice*, under Any *Obligation*, to pardon continually All the Sins of All Penitents; But this *gracious* and *free* Compaſſion, his divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs has thought fit to manifeſt, in the Method of That Redemption purchaſed by the Death of Chriſt. In point of *Gratitude* therefore, no leſs than in *Duty*, are we bound frequently to commemorate this unparalleled Love of our Lord; and our neglecting to attend this ſacred Ordinance, is breaking thro' the ſtrongeſt ties of a double Obligation. I *might* add, further, that not only in *Duty and Gratitude*, but in *Intereſt* alſo are we obliged to attend theſe poſitive Inſtitutions; God having appointed them as *external* Means, to promote and improve in us (that which is the great End of all outward Performances,) the *real* Virtue and *inward* Religion of the Mind. But This is the

2*d*. Thing I propoſed to conſider, namely, What *Benefits* we may expect to be made partakers of, by the due and worthy performance of this Duty. And here, as I before obſerved, tho' we did not diſtinctly know what thoſe Benefits were; yet in all reaſon ought we with an implicit Faith to have obeyed the commandment of *Him*, who, as he cannot deceive, ſo neither can he impoſe any thing upon us, that is not for our advantage. But, in reality, the *Benefits* we partake hereby are manifeſt and evident. For, though the *Sacrifice* of the Death of Chriſt, is not daily repeated; as the Church of *Rome* has fondly and prophanely imagined: Though the *Subſtance* of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, is not in an unintelligible manner produced anew, out of the elements of Bread and Wine: Tho' the *grace of God* is not confined by any neceſſary connexion to the material action; that the mere formal and external participation, ſhould, without true devotion of mind and without real amendment of life, operate ſecretly and unintelligibly any ſpiritual advantage, according to ſome Men's vain and ſuperſtitious expectation: Yet, when with Hearts *full* of Piety and true Devotion, with *ſtedfaſt Faith* in God, and *firm reſolutions* of ſincere Obedience, Men thankfully and frequently, in that manner which God has appointed, commemorate the Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt once offered for ever; is it not evidently a great and ineſtimable Benefit, if, through the Aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God, annexed *not* to the material elements, or to the outward action, but to the Ordinance partaken of by truly devout and well diſpoſed minds; their *Faith* in God; be increaſed; their *Hope and Truſt* in him be ſtrengthened; their *Charity* towards their brethren be inlarged, in proportion to that Love they are commemorating of their common Lord; their *good reſolutions* be confirmed; *themſelves inabled*, to *fulfil* thoſe reſolutions in more effectual Obedience; and *comforted* with fuller aſſurance of pardon of their paſt Sins, upon true Repentance and Amendment, thro' the interceſſion of Him who *died* for them? Theſe (I ſay,) are evidently great and ineſtimable *Benefits*: And very clearly ariſing, from a due and worthy frequenting of the Holy Communion. For, if, even to *private* Prayer our Saviour has annexed ſuch a promiſe, that with far greater readineſs than Men *give good Gifts unto their Children*, will our *heavenly Father give* good things, St. *Matt*. vii. 11. (*ſpiritual* good things even his *Holy Spirit*, as St. *Luke* in the parallel place expreſſes it,) *to them that ask him*; and if all *publick* Devotions, being Ordinances of God's own appointment, as Means and Inſtruments of Religion, have ſtill a greater aſſurance of God's Bleſſing attending them; how much more in this moſt ſolemn of all religious actions, in this great commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt, is it reaſonable to believe, that pious and well-diſpoſed Minds, are, by the aſſiſtance of the

Spirit

Spirit of God, which delights to dwell in heavenly and devout Hearts improv'd in all religious Affections, and ſtrengthened unto the acceptable Obedience of a Holy Life? But all this depends, as I before obſerved, and as Chriſtians can never be too frequently reminded; It depends (I ſay) entirely, not on any ſecret Virtue annexed to the external Action, (which is one of the moſt pernicious of all Errors in matters of Religion;) but it depends wholly on the right Diſpoſition and worthy Qualification of a pious and devout Mind. SERM. LIX.

Which was the 3*d* thing I propoſed to conſider; namely, What *Qualifications* or *Preparation* is neceſſary, in order to the making us worthy partakers of the Holy Communion. *That*, in *general*, there *is* a diſtinction to be made between things ſacred and profane; is allowed by all men. *That* men are not to approach to the Table of the Lord, with the ſame careleſs and indifferency of Mind, with the ſame unattentiveneſs and unconcernedneſs of Spirit, with the ſame worldly Thoughts and Diſpoſitions about them, as they do to a common Feaſt: *That*, ſeeing (as St. *Paul* argues) we *have houſes to eat and to drink in*, therefore we ought not to *deſpiſe the Church of God*, by behaving ourſelves careleſly in *Both places* alike: *That*, if we come unworthily and without *any* due Preparation of Mind, this is *not to eat the Lord's Supper*; But, inſtead thereof, we become *guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*, i. e. guilty of profaneneſs, in not *diſcerning the Lord's Body*, in not diſtinguiſhing ſufficiently a ſolemn Act of Religion, by the difference of our behaviour from that in Common Life: *That* hereby *we eat and drink our own condemnation*, that is, as St. *Paul* expreſly interprets himſelf, we provoke God to inflict *ſeveral* kinds of *judgments* upon us. All this is acknowledged by every one. But *wherein* particularly conſiſts *that due Preparation*, by which we may be ſure to avoid thoſe evils and dangers, and to obtain the Benefits of worthy receiving; this is what the Conſciences of well-diſpoſed Perſons, are always deſirous to be eſpecially inſtructed in. Now the only rule the Scripture gives us in this caſe, is that Advice of the Apoſtle, in the Words immediately following the Text; ver. 28. *Let a man* examine *himſelf*, *and ſo let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup.* And *This Examination* can only be of two ſorts: Either an Examination into the *whole* ſtate and general courſe of a man's Life, whether he be at all a ſincere Chriſtian, or not; or elſe an Examination into the *preſent* diſpoſition of his mind, whether he be at *this particular Time* in a devout Frame and Temper, or not. The *former* of theſe is indeed of exceeding great *importance*, but of no *difficulty* at all; the latter is of great *difficulty* and full of ſcruple, but by no means of ſo great *importance*. 1*ſt*, A man is to examine into the *whole* ſtate and *general* courſe of his life, whether he be at all a ſincere Chriſtian, or not. In this ſenſe St. *Paul* uſes the word; 2 *Cor.* xiii. 5. Examine *yourſelves*, *whether ye be in the Faith*; *prove your own ſelves*: *Know ye not your own ſelves*, *how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you*, *except ye be reprobates*? And *this* Examination, is not a matter of great difficulty: For, as St. *John* tells us, *the children of God are manifeſt*, *and the children of the Devil*; *Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs*, *is not of God*, *neither he that loveth not his Brother*. If any man be a Blaſphemer of God, or a profane Mocker and Deſpiſer of Religion; if he has no Senſe of the Majeſty of God upon his Mind, but habitually profanes that ſacred and adorable Name by Oaths and vain Imprecations; if any man lives in the practice of *ſecret* Fraud and Deceit, of cheating and over-reaching his Neighbours; or by acts *of open* Violence and Cruelty, of Paſſion and blood-thirſty Revenge, ſhows that he *hates* his Brother whom God commands him to *love*; if any man indulges himſelf in Sins of brutiſh Uncleanneſs, or gives himſelf over to Drunkenneſs and baſe Debauchery; there is no great Difficulty in ſuch a perſon's Examination of himſelf; for his Conſcience at the firſt Thought condemns him without controverſy, and his *Sins* apparently *go before unto judgment*. He is unfit, not only to approach the Table of the Lord; but unfit to join himſelf in the aſſemblies of the Saints; unfit to bear the Name and Profeſſion of a Chriſtian; unworthy to lift up his Eyes towards Heaven, towards the throne *of him* who *cannot behold iniquity*. Such a perſon has no other courſe to take, but immediately with ſhame and confuſion of Face to acknowledge his unworthineſs, and *repent in duſt and aſhes*, to turn himſelf unto the Lord by a total Change of his Courſe of Life, and an effectual Reformation of manners; and to *cry mightily unto him that is able to ſave*,

SERM. LIX.

if perhaps the Wickedneſs of his paſt life may be forgiven him. But *without* ſuch a thorough Change of the whole courſe of his life, to imagine that by the formal Preparation of a few days devotion, he can become worthy to partake of the Holy Communion, and then return to his former vicious Practices; this openly *mocking* the Authority of God, who hateth the Hypocrite; 'tis as it were *challenging* the Almighty to make good his threatnings. But now on the other hand, if a man in the general courſe of his life has made it his ſincere endeavour to obey the commandments of God, to live in the habitual Practice of Sobriety, Righteouſneſs, Piety and Charity; If he has either been ſo happy as to have avoided all great crimes, or at leaſt has truly repented of them by utterly forſaking them, and his conſcience accuſes him of no other unrepented and unforſaken Sins, but the daily incurſions of human Frailty; the Frailties that virtuous and good men always complain of, but can never wholly eſcape; the little deviations of inadvertency and want of attention; the ſmall ſurprizes of Paſſion and ſudden temptation in things not of the higheſt importance, the careleſsneſs of an unguarded word, the Vanity of an indecent thought, the want of conſtant warmth and affection in devotion, or the like: When *this*, I ſay, is the caſe; then the Preparation of ſuch a Perſon for the Holy Communion, is only that *ſecond* ſort of Examination I mentioned; an Examination into the *preſent* diſpoſition of his mind, whether he be at this particular time in a devout Frame and Temper or not. And This, as I ſaid, is indeed, to pious perſons of melancholy diſpoſitions, a matter very often of great Difficulty and full of Scruple; but, in reality, by no means of ſo great importance as the other. For, though we *are* indeed always to *keep* our *feet*, *when we enter into the Houſe of God*; that we *offer* not *the Sacrifice of fools*: yet the ſlowneſs and indiſpoſition, the want of warmth and affection, the troubleſom and uneaſy or even irreligious Thoughts coming ſuddenly into their minds, which ſuch melancholy pious perſons are apt to complain of; are by no means things that unqualify them for religious duties. Such perſons, ſeeing they conſtantly endeavour to obey the commandments of God, and to live in the habitual Practice of true Virtue, are always *ſincerely religious*, though they be not always *equally ſenſible of it* to their own Satisfaction. Their Lamps, though *not* always alike *trimmed*, yet are always *burning*. They have always *upon* them what our Saviour ſtiles the *wedding-garment*, although *not* always in *equal order*. Wherefore, though it becomes us highly, upon every ſolemn occaſion, to trim our lamps, to ſet our garments in order, to excite our moſt affectionate devotion, to lay aſide for the preſent all ſecular and worldly Thoughts, and to examine more ſtrictly and particularly into the ſtate and diſpoſition of our Souls, as Time and Opportunity offers, without anxious and ſuperſtitious ſolicitude; yet where this is by any accident prevented, good men are, by the habitual courſe of a virtuous life, in a continual general Preparation; and may at *all times* as ſafely communicate without Scruple, as 'tis certain that a vicious and debauched Perſon can at *no time* be fit to do it, by any formal preparative of a few days Devotion. For after all that *can* be ſaid upon this Subject, there is *no other* certain and infallible mark, to judge whether we have prepared ourſelves duly, and communicated worthily or not; but only by the conſequent effect. If we improve more in Virtue, and more diligently avoid every kind of Sin; if we ſerve God more devoutly, and love our Brother with a more univerſal Charity, and endeavour more ſincerely and ſteddily to obey the commandments of God in the following courſe of our lives; 'tis very certain our Preparation was good, and our Communion acceptable: But if we continue to live viciouſly, in *Any* inſtance of unrighteous Practice; our Preparation at beſt, was but a formal hypocriſy; and our Offering, was without Incenſe. This is the only Rule that may certainly be depended upon; This is judging of the Tree by its Fruit; which, both in *Nature* and in *Religion*, is the only unerring way of Trial. And all *other* marks whatſoever, are but perplexing difficulties, full of doubts and ſcruples and endleſs Superſtition. And now from hence 'tis very eaſy to ſhow, in the

Eccleſ. v. 1.

4*th* place, The Groundleſsneſs and Vanity of moſt of thoſe reaſons, which men uſually alledge for their abſtaining from the Communion, under pretence of want of due Preparation. For, *if* their unpreparedneſs ariſes from a vicious and debauched

debauched life, which they are unwilling to reform; they *are* unworthy indeed, and they ought to abſtain; but not from the Communion only, but from *Prayers* alſo, and from *all Profeſſion* of Religion; they being ſuch perſons, whom Chriſtian Diſcipline ought to ſeparate from the Communion of Saints, as their own conſcience ſeparates them from the hopes of Heaven. All religious Actions to *ſuch* perſons, being like watering a plant, whoſe very roots are dead. In which ſtate ſo long as they continue, they have no great reaſon to be uneaſy at their unworthineſs to receive the Holy Communion *here*; ſeeing they have no regard for their own Souls, and no Care of being worthy to partake of the Happineſs of the Righteous *hereafter*. But *if* the unworthineſs they alledge, be only a *preſent* Want of Warmth of Devotion, or a *general* Senſe of their being frail and ſinful creatures, notwithſtanding their beſt and moſt ſincere endeavours to avoid all known Sin; this I have already ſhown, not to be a real Unworthineſs, but merely an ungrounded and melancholy imagination, which ought to be ſlighted and reſiſted. *If* they be terrified at the ſeverity of the Penalty, that *they who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink condemnation to themſelves*; 'tis to be obſerved, that when this is underſtood of the unworthineſs *only of a ſingle Action*, the condemnation denounced is not eternal damnation, but temporal judgment, as St. *Paul expreſly* explains his own Words in That very Text. But when the unworthineſs is *habitual*, and ſo liable to a ſeverer condemnation; 'tis evident the penalty annexed, is not to the ſingle *Action of eating and drinking*, but to the *habitual ſtate of Unworthineſs*; in which evil ſtate *That man* equally continues, who, being habitually Unworthy, *eats not*; as he who *eats*, being likewiſe unworthy: And conſequently he cannot, by abſtaining, eſcape that condemnation, which is *however* due to to his Unworthineſs, whether he communicates or no. For 'tis not poſſible, that he who *now* continues unworthy to partake of the *Lord's Supper*, ſhould *hereafter* be found worthy to participate of the *eternal Supper of the Lamb*. Wherefore, *whilſt* any man really continues unworthy; as it is no benefit to him to *communicate*, ſo to *abſtain* is no advantage, and there is no other way for him to eſcape the judgment he fears, but by immediately preparing himſelf in the way of righteouſneſs, to become worthy to *ſerve* God here, and *enjoy* him hereafter. Laſtly, if men abſtain out of an apprehenſion that Sins committed afterwards will become unpardonable; I anſwer, there is not the leaſt ground or hint in Scripture for any ſuch apprehenſion. That the Sins of Chriſtians againſt the clear light of the Goſpel ſhall *more difficultly* be pardoned, than the Sins of thoſe who want that light; the Scripture *does indeed* frequently aſſure us: And 'twere well if Men would think of it more than they do: But *this* Aggravation of Sin is equally the ſame, in thoſe who receive the Communion, and in thoſe who receive it not. For not, if we Sin wilfully after we have received the *Sacrament*, but if we Sin wilfully after we have received the *knowledge of the Truth*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) there remains *no new* Sacrifice for Sin. And *this* conſideration indeed is a good reaſon, not to deter men from the Communion, but to deter them from pretending to be Chriſtians at all, ſo long as they reſolve to live viciouſly and irreligiouſly.

5. And now nothing remains of what I propoſed upon this Subject, but in the *laſt place* juſt to mention ſome of the groſs corruptions, wherewith the Church of *Rome* have highly diſhonoured this ſolemn commemoration of the Death of our Lord. And

1*ſt*, Whereas *our Saviour* has thought fit to inſtitute no other memorial of his Death and Paſſion, but only the Euchariſtical Feaſt of the Sacrament; 'tis a great and unpardonable preſumption, for men to imagine that they *themſelves* can invent *better* repreſentations and *more ſenſible* helps to Devotion, than that which God has appointed: Such as are the uſe of *Images*, and the like, in religious Worſhip. Wherein, as they have departed from the Simplicity and ſpiritual Purity of the Chriſtian worſhip; ſo they have found by experience, that the addition of any ſuch human inventions in the Worſhip of God, has tended only to corrupt mens manners, and bring in great and endleſs Superſtitions.

2. Whereas our Saviour inſtituted this Holy Sacrament expreſly for a perpetual *Remembrance* or *Commemoration* of his Death and Paſſion; 'tis a very great corruption, to teach that the elements are *changed* into the *Subſtance of the Body and Blood*

of

SERM. LIX.

of Chriſt, and that the Sacrament is properly a continual *repetition* (not commemoration) of that expiatory Sacrifice once offered upon the croſs. Our Lord's command, is, *Do this in* remembrance *of Me*. Now in the *Nature of Things*, the *remembrance* of any thing, is not the *repetition* of the thing itſelf. And ſuch a *repeated* offering up continually the *real* ſubſtantial Body and Blood of Chriſt, (if any ſuch thing could be,) would not be a *commemorating* the Sacrifice *once* offered upon the croſs, but *obliterating* the memory of it by offering perpetually *new* ones. And *then muſt Chriſt oft have ſuffered ſince the foundation of the World*; *whereas now Once only in the end of the World* (as the Scripture expreſly affirms) *has he appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*. The Arguments drawn by thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, from the figurative expreſſions, by which the *elements* are called *Chriſt's Body and Blood*; and the *Sacrament* itſelf a *Sacrifice*; (in like manner as Chriſt figuratively calls himſelf, a *Door*, a *Way*, a *Vine*, and the like; and the Apoſtles call *Praiſe* and *Alms* a *Sacrifice*; and St. *Paul* ſtiles the *Chriſtian Church* the True *Circumciſion*:) The Arguments, I ſay, drawn from theſe figurative expreſſions for the Popiſh doctrine, are as abſurd and contrary to common ſenſe, as their Practice of worſhipping a piece of Bread for God, is idolatrous and abominable.

3. Whereas our Saviour commands his Diſciples expreſly to *eat* of this *Bread* and *drink* of this *Cup*; 'tis a moſt unjuſtifiable innovation in the Church of *Rome*, to with-hold the *Cup* from the people. St. *Paul*, in the plaineſt words that can be, declares it to be the peoples Duty, to partake in *both* kinds; *As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this* cup, *ye do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come*: And our Saviour's command to his Diſciples, was, Drink *ye all of this*, as well as, *Take, eat, this is my Body*. To which if it be replied (as they ſometimes abſurdly do) that all thoſe Diſciples whom our Saviour commanded to *drink* this, were Prieſts, and none of them Lay-men; 'tis evident they were the ſame Perſons only, to whom he adminiſtred the *Bread* alſo: and then it will follow, by the ſame reaſon, that the people are denied the Cup, that they may be denied partaking of the Sacrament at all: Which is the higheſt Impiety. But then *We alſo* of the reformed Church ought always to be put in mind, that though we are allowed to communicate in *Both* kinds, yet we may ſtill loſe the Advantage of *Both*, if the Holineſs of our Lives be not anſwerable to the Obligations which This Communion lays upon us.

SERMON

SERMON LX.

Of the Catholick Church of Chriſt.

HEB. xii. 22, 23.

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, To the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of All, and to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the new Covenant.

SERM. LX.

THESE words contain the livelieſt and moſt noble Deſcription of the *Church of God*, and of the *Communion* of all its Members both with each other and with their Head; that is any where to be found in the whole Scripture. The Name of *God's Church*; and the *Fellowſhip* of the *Saints*, or the *Communion* of the *Faithful*; are words perpetually in the Mouths of *All*, who call themſelves *Chriſtians*: But the true *Intent* and *Application* of them, according to the *Scripture-ſenſe* of the words, is attended to and underſtood by *Few*. The Love of *Power*, *Authority*, and *worldly Dominion*, has made *Some* abuſe the

SERM. LX.

ſacred Name of the *Church of God*, to ſerve Purpoſes of Tyranny, Ambition, and Cruelty: And This is what the Scripture calls, *The Man of Sin ſitting in the* Temple (or Church) *of God*. *Others*, through a *mean*, *peeviſh*, and *uncharitable* Spirit; fond of *impoſing* upon their Brethren *particular Modes and Notions*; and *blending* Doctrines and Ceremonies of mere *human Authority*, as of the ſame importance with the *eſſential Laws* of our *Saviour*'s kingdom; have profanely and ſacrilegiouſly made uſe of the ſame *venerable* Name of *the Church of God*, to cover the Worldly Deſigns and Intereſts of particular *Parties*, *Factions*, or *Bodies* of Men: And This, in the proper and higheſt Senſe of the word, is an Inſtance of the Sin of *Schiſm*; the Sin of *rending the Body of Chriſt*; the Sin of *cauſing Diviſions* in the *univerſal Church*, through the Ambition of Men incloſing to themſelves by *temporal power* thoſe *ſpiritual Privileges*, which our Saviour intended to confer upon his *Church Univerſal*. The Church of *Rome* has been the great Author and Example of this *fundamental Corruption*: Which has been of ſuch pernicious conſequence to the Chriſtian Religion, that ſometimes even for ſeveral Ages together, the very *Notion* of the *Church of Chriſt* has been in a manner wholly worn out and obliterated among thoſe who called themſelves Chriſtians; and there has ſucceeded in its place a mere *Temporal Polity* and *worldly Dominion*, in the room of *That Kingdom* which our Lord himſelf ſo expreſly declared *was not* to be *of This World*. Inſomuch that Chriſtians have too generally behaved themſelves in ſuch a manner, as if they thought that at That Great and Tremendous day, when we muſt All appear before the Tribunal of Chriſt, men were to be judged in *Nations* and *Bodies Politick*, in *Parties* and *Societies of human eſtabliſhment*, according to certain *Forms of Government* and particular *Syſtems of Notions, and Rights and Ceremonies*; and not that every ſingle Man ſhall then perſonally be acquitted or condemned, according to the great and Univerſal Rules of the Goſpel; according to what he himſelf in his own perſon has actually done in the Fleſh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; that is, according to his *Obedience* or *Diſobedience* to the Commands of God, the *Morality* or *Immorality* of the Actions of his Life. The Want of *This* conſideration, has incredibly perplext Men's Notions concerning the *Church of God*: And though *no Two Things* are in Scripture conſtantly repreſented ſo directly oppoſite to each other, as the *Love of God* and the *Love of the World*; yet in all *Popiſh* times *principally*, and in all *Other corrupt* Ages (*proportionably*,) *Dominion and Pomp and Power*, inſtead of *Truth and Righteouſneſs and Charity*, have been eſteemed as Marks and Characters of Chriſt's *Holy Catholick Church*. But undoubtedly the *true Church of God* here upon *Earth*, conſiſts of the *ſame Perſons*, is made up of the very *ſame Members*, of which *hereafter* it ſhall be conſtituted in *Heaven*. And therefore as, at the *day of judgment*, our Saviour has no where given us any the leaſt Intimation, that in order to determine any Man's final Sentence, inquiry will be made concerning *Nations* and *Parties*, concerning a man's relation to *one body politick or another*, concerning *Rites and Ceremonies or Forms of Government* and the like; which are Now the Great Objects of Men's Zeal, and the Main cauſes of their reviling, hating and perſecuting each other: but every Man's future and eternal State will Then be appointed him by the impartial and unerring Judge, according to his behaviour in every ſtation and circumſtance wherein Providence has placed him, *i. e.* according to the virtuouſneſs or viciouſneſs of his paſt life: So *Now* alſo, if we would make a right Judgment concerning ourſelves or Others, whether we be real and Living Members of the Body of Chriſt, Children of God, and Heirs of His Kingdom; we muſt take our Eſtimate from the ſame divine Rules and Meaſures, by which we ſhall at laſt be judged; and not from our preſent human Paſſions, and worldly Marks of Diſtinction. They who *worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth*, as our Saviour deſcribes the *True Worſhippers*, Joh. iv. 23; that is, who live with an habitual Senſe of Religion upon their Minds; in a conſtant Exerciſe of *Piety* towards *God*, through *Jeſus Chriſt*; in a *ſober* and *temperate* enjoyment of the things of this preſent World, with an abhorrence of all Vice and Debauchery; and in a regular Practice of *Juſtice*, *Righteouſneſs*, *Equity*, *Meekneſs*, *Charity*, and *univerſal Goodwill* towards Mankind; *looking for*, and waiting unto, *the bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the Great God and of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; who, according to his Promiſe, ſhall give them an inheritance in That *New Heavens and*

New

New Earth, wherein *Truth* and *Righteouſneſs* are to *dwell* for ever: Theſe, and Theſe only, are the true and living Members of *the Body of Chriſt*; *of his Fleſh, and of his Bones*, (as St. *Paul* by a bold and lively Figure moſt elegantly expreſſes it, *Eph.* v. 30;) of *One Body*, and of *One Spirit* with him: Theſe are *indeed* the *Holy Church*, and *City*, and *Temple*, of God: Theſe are they, of whom the Apoſtle in the Text by one of the nobleſt and moſt expreſſive Metaphors that ever was uſed by Any Writer, affirms that they are *already* come *unto Mount Sion*; Even while they ſtill continue here upon Earth, in this mortal and tranſitory ſtate; yet becauſe their converſation is in Heaven, and they live according to the righteous Laws of That ſpiritual Country, wherein they expect their portion of Inheritance, and into which *there ſhall in no caſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lie*; therefore they *are already*, ſaith he, *come unto mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable Company of Angels, To the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of All, and to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant.* SERM. LX.

In the further treating upon which words, I ſhall *firſt* conſider diſtinctly the ſeveral *Perſons*, whom the Apoſtle here ſuppoſes to have a *relation* to, and *communion* with, each other: And from thence, *ſecondly*, there will naturally appear the true Scripture-notion of the *Catholick Church of Chriſt*, and of That *Unity*, or *Communion*, which is between the Members of it, as Members of the *One Body of Chriſt*.

Iſt, As to the ſeveral *Perſons*, whom the Apoſtle here ſuppoſes to have a *relation* to, and *communion* with, each other; 'tis to be obſerved that the Kingdom of God, is in Scripture deſcribed under the Notion or Similitude of a *royal City*: Heb. xi. 10. *Abraham looked for a* City *which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God:* In the words of the Text, 'tis *Mount Sion, the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem.* Now as in *every* City or Kingdom, *All* who in Any ſtation belong unto it, have a mutual *relation to*, and ſome ſort of *communication with* each other, by which they are *All* eſteemed as *One political Body*; The *Prince*, who governs All; The *Perſons by whom* he governs; The *Subjects*, who live under That Government: and *Thoſe* who, though travelling in *foreign* parts, yet ſtill continue under the ſame Dominion, So with regard to this heavenly City, the Apoſtle St. *Paul* tells all Chriſtians, that they are *no more ſtrangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the houſhold of God; being built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone, in whom the whole building is fitly framed together.* And in deſcribing the conſtitution of this *City* or *Kingdom of God*, and the *perſons* with whom every one that becomes a Subject of That Kingdom, enters conſequently into ſome *relation*; the ſame Apoſtle, in the Text, diſtinctly enumerates the following particulars. There is, ſays he, *God, the Judge of All*: There is *Jeſus, the Mediator of the New Covenant:* There is *an innumerable Company of Angels*: There are *the Spirits of juſt men made perfect*; And there is *the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born, which are* written *in Heaven*, though they be not yet actually *arrived* there. In the

1*ſt* place, ſays the Apoſtle, *ye are come* to *God, the Judge of All.* Ye are come to a *right Knowledge* of the *One True God*, the *Author and Maker* of all things, the *Father* of all rational Beings, and the Supreme *Judge* of every one's behaviour. By *Nature*, we are his *Subjects* and his *Creatures*; by *Sin*, we are become *Enemies* to him, and *Objects of his Diſpleaſure*; by *Repentance and true Religion*, we have again *Acceſs* to him, and are admitted to bear *relation* to him as our *God*, and our *Father*. He is the *Father* of *whom*, by *Nature the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*; and through whoſe *Grace and Goodneſs*, even *Sinners*, upon their Amendment and Reformation, are again favourably received into their *Father's houſe*, into the *Family or City of God. Behold*, ſaith St. *John, what manner of Love the Father has beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called The* Sons *of God*, 1 Joh. iii. 1. In the deſcription of the *heavenly Jeruſalem*, the *City of the Living God*; (in alluſion to which, the *Earthly Jeruſalem*, or Congregation of true Worſhippers, is by our Saviour ſtiled *The City of the Great King*;) In the deſcription, I ſay, of the *heavenly Jeruſalem*, the relation of God

to

SERM. LX.

to his faithful ſervants is thus ſet forth, *Rev.* xxi. 3. and xxii. 4. *Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God; And they ſhall ſee his Face, and his Name* the Father's Name, *ch.* xiv. 1.) *ſhall be in their foreheads*: And of *him that overcometh*, ſaith God, *ch.* xxi. 7. *I will be his God, and He ſhall be my Son.* Upon account of *which Promiſe*, though to the Patriarchs, and to all other good Men, it was made at a *great Diſtance*; yet the Apoſtle juſtly draws his Inference even with regard to the *preſent* time, *Heb.* xi. 16. *Wherefore God is not aſhamed*, is not *Now* aſhamed, *to be called* Their God; *for he hath prepared for them a City.* To *this relation* between *God* and righteous *Men*, St. *John* has reſpect; when he tells us, 1 *Joh.* i. 3. *Our Fellowſhip is with the Father.* The word, *Fellowſhip*, ſignifies in the original, *Communion* or *mutual Relation*; The Saints, are the *Saints of the moſt High*; and Good Men, the *Children of the Living God.*

The Uſe, or practical Application of *This Head*, is the Inference St. *John* has drawn for us, 1 *Joh.* iii. 3. *Every man that has This hope in him*, (every Man that is truly ſenſible of this *Love which the Father has beſtowed upon us*,) *purifies himſelf even as He is pure*: Always remembring the Admonition of our Saviour, *Bleſſed are the pure in Heart, for they ſhall ſee God*: And That ſolemn declaration made to St. *John* at the Concluſion of his prophetick Viſion of the new Jeruſalem, the City of God; *Rev.* xxii. 14. *Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in thro' the Gates into the City.*

2*dly*, *Ye are come*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *to Jeſus, the Mediator of the New Covenant*; to *the Blood of ſprinkling, that ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel.* 'Tis by *Chriſt*, that repenting Sinners, having *received the Atonement* and reconciliation; are brought back unto God; have *Acceſs unto the Father*; are *preſented* as *faultleſs before the preſence of* His *Glory*, who *has gathered together in One All things in Chriſt, both which are in Heaven and which are on Earth*, Eph. i. 10. From henceforth therefore, *our fellowſhip*, as St. *John* tells us, *is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt*: And *God is faithful*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* i. 9, (that is, if *we* continue obedient, *God* for *His* part will certainly perform *His* Promiſe *faithfully*,) *by whom ye were called unto the fellowſhip of his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* *Chriſt* has an everlaſting Kingdom given unto him; wherein he rules, as a *Son* in his *own houſe*, under his *Father* the Supreme Houſholder; *Angels, and Principalities, and Powers, being made ſubject unto him*: And *He is the Head of the Body, the Church*, Col. i. 18. He is the *Head; from whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by That which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the Body unto the edifying of itſelf in Love*, Eph. iv. 16. He is *the chief corner-ſtone, in whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom Ye alſo are builded together for an habitation of God thro' the Spirit*, ch. ii. 21. He is the *Vine*, and his Diſciples are the *Branches*, Joh. xv. 1. God looks upon *us*, not as what we were originally *in ourſelves*, but as being *Now*, by Regeneration and Adoption, *planted together in Chriſt*; as redeemed and purchaſed, by *His* Blood: as *made accepted in the Beloved*; as *Members* of *His Body*; as *Subjects* of the *Kingdom* given unto *Him.* Inſomuch that St. *Paul* tells us, upon account of This our relation to Chriſt, that *God hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit together*, (has *already* made us ſit together) *in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus*, Eph. ii. 6. ſpeaking, in an elegant and figurative manner, as of a thing already *accompliſhed*, what our Lord expreſſes by way of Promiſe, with regard to a *Future* State, *Rev.* iii. 21. *To Him that overcometh, will I grant to ſit with Me in my Throne, even as I overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in His Throne.* This is in the higheſt and moſt exalted Senſe, what the Text calls, *being come unto Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and unto God the Judge of All.* This is the Accompliſhment of our Saviour's Prayer, *Joh.* xvii. 21. *That they all may be One, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that They alſo may be One in Us: —— And the glory which thou gaveſt me, I have given Them; that They may be One, even as We are One: I in Them, and Thou in Me: that they may be made perfect in One.* Laſtly, This is what the Apoſtle tells

tells us, *Heb.* ii. 11. *Both he that ſanctifieth, and they who are ſanctified, are all of One; for which cauſe he is not aſhamed to call them Brethren.*

The proper Application of what has been ſaid upon *This* Head, is to Thoſe who underſtanding *literally* ſome of the fore-cited expreſſions of Scripture, look upon themſelves to be in *ſuch* a manner Members of the Body of Chriſt, as that *His* Righteouſneſs and Acceptableneſs to God is *imputed* to *Them*, and This merely by Virtue of their confident Reliance upon *His* Merits, without being much ſollicitous whether they *themſelves* be perſonally indued with the Fruits of Righteouſneſs or no. Which is one of the *greateſt Corruptions*, that was ever introduced into the Chriſtian Religion. For indeed, all thoſe expreſſions, of being *Members of Chriſt*, of being *One with him*, of being *in him*, and the like; are merely *figurative* and *moral*; denoting the *Subjection* of *Members* to their *Head*, and the *Unity* or *Likeneſs* which ariſes from *Imitation* and *Obedience*. *If we have been planted together*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *into the* Likeneſs *of Chriſt's death, we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his Reſurrection.* Rom. vi. 5. And what *That* means he explains, *ver.* 4 and 6; *like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the Dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo We alſo ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life;* —— *that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth ye ſhould not ſerve Sin.* Let no Man therefore deceive himſelf with vain words: Being *Members of Chriſt*, and *Sons of God*; means nothing elſe but *Obedience to the Goſpel*, and thereby conſequently obtaining *reconciliation with God.* 2 Cor. v. 17. *If any Man be in Chriſt, he is a new Creature*; that is, his Life muſt be actually amended and reformed. So likewiſe *Rom.* xiii. 14. *Put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, is joined in the ſame verſe as an equivalent exhortation with, *make not proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof.* Having the *Spirit* of Chriſt, that is, a *moral likeneſs* to him; is the only thing, that can make us truly belong to him: *If any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is None of His*, Rom. viii. 9. And *ver.* 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God*, that is, who *bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit*, or live in the Practice of all moral virtues, *they*, and they only, *are the Sons of God. Jeſus*, the Text tells us, *is the Mediator of the New Covenant*; of *That* Covenant, within which are declared the gracious Terms of Pardon and Forgiveneſs to all thoſe who repent and amend; and which, upon That account, is oppoſed in the foregoing verſe, to the Terrors of the Law, *to the Mount that burned with Fire*, joined with *blackneſs, darkneſs and Tempeſt.* To *Come* therefore *to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, ſignifies, by true Repentance and effectual Amendment of Life, (not by *groundleſs Confidence* and *vain Reliance on Chriſt*, but by ſincere *Obedience* to his *Commands*, by *true Repentance and Amendment of Life*) made available to the Forgiveneſs of paſt Sin through the *Interceſſion of Chriſt*; To *come to Chriſt*, I ſay, ſignifies, by That Repentance which the Goſpel teaches, to be reconciled, and have Acceſs again, as a returning Prodigal Son, through *Chriſt* to *God the Judge of All*, the *Supreme Lord and Father of the Univerſe.* Thus this whole point is at large ſet forth by St. *Paul*, Col. i. 19. *It pleaſed the Father, that in Him ſhould all Fulneſs dwell; And by Him to reconcile all things unto himſelf;* —— *And you that were ſometimes alienated, and Enemies in your Mind by wicked Works, yet now hath he reconciled, In the body of his Fleſh thro' Death, to preſent you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his Sight; If ye continue in the Faith, grounded and ſettled, and be not moved away from the Hope of the Goſpel.*

Having thus briefly explained the *Two Firſt* Particulars in the Text, (the *firſt* in *order of Nature*, though not in the *placing of the words*;) *Ye are come, to God the Judge of All*, and *to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*: It might here ſeem natural to have been expected in the next place, that in like manner as in ſome *Other* paſſages of Scripture, with the *Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and *the Love of God*, is joined likewiſe *the Fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt*; ſo *here* alſo, I ſay, it might ſeem naturally to have been expected, that the Apoſtle ſhould have added, the *Communion* or *Fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt*; Which with the Two before-mentioned are the True-Scripture-*Trinity*. *Ye are come, unto* God the Judge of All, *and to* Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and (it might naturally have been expected he ſhould here have ſubjoined, *and*) unto *the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter*. But This *laſt* particular, the Apoſtle does not add: And the *Reaſon* of his omitting it, ſeems to be This. The *Holy Spirit*, is in Scripture repreſented as being to the

SERM. LX.

Church in the place *of Christ*; and, *for That very reason*, is ſtiled *the Comforter*, becauſe his proper office is, *in the abſence of Chriſt*, to comfort the Faithful with his Gifts and Graces, with his Holy Influence and Aſſiſtance. *Joh.* xvi. 7. *I tell you the Truth*, ſaith our Lord, *it is expedient for you, that I go away; For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you;* — and *He will guide you into All Truth; for he ſhall not ſpeak of himſelf, but whatſoever he ſhall hear, That ſhall he ſpeak; and he will ſhew you things to come.* The proper Office therefore of the *Holy Spirit*, being in Chriſt's ſtead to ſupport and comfort, to guide and direct the Church, until our Lord's ſecond Coming; *for this reaſon*, the Apoſtle in a Text, ſpeaking of good Chriſtians in a very ſublime and figurative manner, as being *already* come unto the True Mount *Sion*, the City of the Living God, the heavenly *Jeruſalem*; and being, by ſpiritual relation, communion, and unity, as it were *already* actually preſent with *God the Judge of All*, and with *Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*; for *This reaſon* (I ſay) it ſeems to be, that the Apoſtle omits in this place the *Fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt*, as a thing *fulfilled* and *accompliſhed*, as having *already* obtained its full Effect; as being now *ſuperſeded* by the immediate preſence of *God the Judge of all*, and of our *Mediator Jeſus Chriſt*. During our *Abſence* from whoſe Beatific preſence, while we continue in this mortal Life, good Men are under the direction and influence of the *Holy Spirit*. And the Proof, by which only it can appear that they really are ſo, is not a pretending to *Enthuſiaſtic influences*, but their bringing forth *the Fruits of the Spirit*. Which *Fruits of the Spirit*, (if we will follow St. *Paul*'s Authority, rather than the imaginations of Enthuſiaſts) are *Love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance*, Gal. v. 22: That is, the Practice of all moral and eternal Virtues.

The remaining particulars of the Text, are: Ye are come *to an innumerable Company of Angels*, to *the Spirits of juſt men made perfect*, and *to the general Aſſembly or Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven.*

SERMON

SERMON LXI.

Of the Catholick Church of Chriſt.

HEB. xii. 22, 23.

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, To the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of All, and to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the new Covenant.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words, I have propoſed *Firſt* to conſider diſtinctly the ſeveral *Perſons*, whom the Apoſtle here ſuppoſes to have a *relation* to, and communion *with*, each other: And from thence, *Secondly*, to deduce the true Scripture-notion of the *Catholick Church of Chriſt*, and of That *Unity* or *Communion* which is between the Members of it, as Members of the *One Body of Chriſt*.

I. *Firſt*, As to the ſeveral *Perſons*, whom the Apoſtle here ſuppoſes to have a *relation* to, and *Communion* with, each other; I obſerved that the *Kingdom of God*, is

SERM. LXI.

is in Scripture deſcribed under the Notion or Similitude of a *royal City*; wherein *All*, who in Any Station belong unto it, have a mutual *relation to*, and ſome ſort of *communication with* each other; by which they are *All* eſteemed as *One political Body*. In the proſecution of which Similitude, the Apoſtle in the Text *diſtinctly enumerates* the following *Particulars*; of which is conſtituted the True *Mount Sion, the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem*. There is, firſt, ſays he; (firſt, in order of *Nature*; though not in the order, wherein the *words are placed*;) There is, in the *firſt* place, *God the Judge of All*: There is, *ſecondly*, *Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*: *Thirdly*, There is, *ſays he, an innumerable Company of Angels*: *Fourthly*, There are *the Spirits of juſt men made perfect*: And *Laſtly*, There is the *general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are* written *in Heaven*, though they be not yet actually *arrived* there.

The *two firſt* of theſe particulars I have already gone through: *Ye are come unto God the Judge of All*, and to *Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*. It remains that I proceed now to the

3*d* particular; *Ye are come*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *unto an innumerable Company of Angels*. *Angels*, are in Scripture declared to be miniſtring Spirits, which go in and out continually before the Throne of God. And *our relation* to them, as members of the ſame heavenly *Jeruſalem*, the City of the Living God, is *manifold* in the *preſent*, as well as in the *future* ſtate. They are Worſhippers together with *Us*, of the *ſame God*, and univerſal Father, *of whom the whole Family in* Heaven *and Earth is named*, Rev. xxii. 9. *I am thy fellow-ſervant*, ſaid the Angel to St. *John*; *I am* Thy *fellow-ſervant*, and the fellow-ſervant *of thy brethren the Prophets, and of them which keep the Sayings of this Book*: *Worſhip God*. Nor are they *only*, in common with Us, *Subjects of the natural Kingdom of God*; but they are alſo moreover *Subjects and Miniſters of* the *mediatorial* Kingdom of *Chriſt*. Heb. i. 6. *When he bringeth in the firſt-begotten into the World, he ſaith, And let all the Angels of God worſhip him*. By *Chriſt*, God has *gathered together in One*, Eph. i. 10. (into One *Family*, into One *Kingdom*, under One *Head*,) *all things both which are in Heaven and which are on Earth*: *Angels, and Authorities, and Powers, being made ſubject unto him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. They are *miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter to thoſe who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation*, Heb. i. 14. Our Saviour, ſpeaking of *little children*, literally; and, figuratively, of *good men*, who are of the ſame harmleſs diſpoſition; tells us, *Mat.* xviii. 10, that the Angels, are Their *Angels* or Miniſters; that is, have the *Care* of them committed to them by God; even thoſe * *principal* Angels, *who always behold the Face of* his *Father which is in Heaven*. In *other* places, the Scripture aſſures us, that they as Subjects of the ſame heavenly Kingdom, are continually obſerving the Providences of God towards his Church; *Theſe things, the Angels deſire to look into*, 1 Pet. i, 12. and Eph. iii. 10. *To the intent, that now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the Church*, (*by the Church*, that is, by the various diſpenſations of Divine Providence towards good men,) *the manifold Wiſdom of God*. It aſſures us; that *there is* joy *in the preſence of the Angels of God, over* every *Sinner that repenteth*, Luk. xv. 10; that the *Souls* of righteous men, as of *Lazarus*, *Luk.* xvi. 22, are, at their departure out of this World, *carried by the Angels into Abraham's boſom*; that, at the general Reſurrection at the laſt day, *the Angels ſhall come forth*, Matt. xiii. 49. *and ſhall ſever the Wicked from among the Juſt*; and laſtly, that *they which ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain That World, and the reſurrection* unto Life, *Luk.* xx. 35, 36, ſhall *themſelves* be *equal unto the Angels, and be the children of God*. Which final union, of *Angels* and righteous *men*, into one heavenly Society, St. *John* excellently ſets forth, in the iv*th* and v*th* chapters of the *Revelation*: Where, beginning the Worſhip *originally* paid to *God* by all his creatures in general, (who, in their *giving glory and honour and thanks to him that ſitteth on the Throne, who liveth for ever and ever*; *reſt not day and night, ſaying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*; ——*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour and Power*; *for thou haſt created all things, and for thy pleaſure they Are, and were created*: And thence proceeding to deſcribe the *particular* Worſhip, which *began* to be paid to *Chriſt* upon his exaltation to the right hand of God; (when the Saints who were redeemed from the Earth, *began* a New *Song*, *ſaying*, *Thou art*

* *Compare* Mat. xviii. 10. *with* Eſth. i. 14. *and* Tobit xii. 15.

ch. iv. 8, 9, 11.

ch. v. 9.

SERM. LXI.

art worthy;——*for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy Blood,* —— *and haſt made us unto our God Kings and Prieſts*;) he at length concludes with uniting in one univerſal Chorus the Voices of *Angels* and of *Men*, giving praiſe at the ſame time to *God* who ſat on the Throne, and to the *Lamb* who had been ſlain for men: *And I heard the Voice of many Angels round about the Throne, and the Living Creatures and the Elders, and the Number of them was ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands, Saying with a loud Voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive Power and Riches and Wiſdom and Strength and Honour and Glory and Bleſſings*; *And every Creature which is in Heaven and on the Earth,* —— *heard I ſaying, Bleſſing and Honour and Glory and Power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* ver. 10. and ch. vii. 11.

The *Uſe* which the Church of *Rome* has made of This Doctrine, of good *men's* being in Scripture joined together with the *innumerable Company of Angels*, as Members of the ſame *heavenly Jeruſalem, the City of the Living God*; The *Uſe*, I ſay, which the Church of *Rome* has made of this Doctrine, has been very *perverſe*, as well as *impious*. For, inſtead of directing their Prayers uniformly to *God the Judge of All*, through *Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, whom the Scripture declares to be alone our *Advocate with the Father*; They, by a *falſe* inference from a *True* doctrine, of *Angels* being *miniſtring Spirits*, have, of their *own* Authority, preſumed to eſtabliſh a *Worſhip of Angels*, in contradiction to the *expreſs Command of God*. For, whereas the Scripture ſolemnly declares, that as there is but *One God*, ſo there is alſo but *One Mediator between God and Men*; they, on the contrary, have, by Angel-worſhip, ſet up Many *Mediators*; which is direct *Idolatry* againſt *Him* who is the *Only True One*. To charge them with giving to *Angels* the proper Worſhip of *God Almighty*, is charging them with a Fact which they *deny*; and therefore is not the beſt and moſt proper way to convince them of their Error: But the ſetting up of *Many* Mediators, is a Fact they do not, and cannot, deny: And yet the Worſhip of *Falſe* Mediators, is as *true and formal Idolatry* againſt the *One Mediator* appointed by God; as the Worſhip of *Falſe* Gods, is Idolatry againſt the *One* God and Father of the Univerſe. St. *Paul* therefore ſeems prophetically to deſcribe their practice, and to condemn it directly upon ſuch a Principle, as cuts off from them all poſſibility of Evaſion or Excuſe; when, ſpeaking *of things which have a Shew of Wiſdom in Will-worſhip and Humility*, Col. ii. 23; he Thus argues, ver. 18, *Let no man beguile you of your Reward, in a voluntary Humility and Worſhipping of Angels, intruding into thoſe things which he hath not ſeen, vainly puft up by his Fleſhly mind, And not holding the Head*; that is, not keeping ſtedfaſt to *Chriſt* the *One Mediator*, upon whom alone the whole Church depends, as the Members of a Body on their Union with the Head.

4*thly*, *Ye are come*, ſaith the Apoſtle in the Text, *to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect*. The True Members of Chriſt's inviſible Church here upon *Earth*, known unto God only, who ſearches the Heart, and judges of every man's ſincerity; are in Scripture always repreſented, as being One and the ſame Body, or Society, with the Saints in *Heaven*: Juſt as perſons travelling in *foreign* parts, are ſtill always eſteemed to continue Members of the ſame Community, with thoſe who remain at home in their native country. *Jeruſalem which is above*, ſaith St. *Paul*, Gal. iv. 26. *is the Mother of us All*. Thoſe who are not actually arrived there, yet, if they be *meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the Saints in Light*, their Treaſure, their Portion is laid up for them in Heaven, and their *Names* are already *written* There. Their Faith, their Hope, their Converſation, their Citizenſhip is in Heaven: They live *Now* according to the Laws of that Spiritual Country; and therefore expect *hereafter* to be admitted there as obedient, at leaſt as penitent and returning Children, into their Father's houſe. Though their *natural* habitation is upon *Earth*; yet, in the *moral* ſenſe, having relinquiſhed things *Earthly*, that is, all the *Wickedneſs* wherein the World generally lies; they are (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *Eph.* ii. 19.) *no more Strangers and Foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God*. St. *John* expreſſes the ſame thing in a ſtill *more ſublime* and elegant figure of ſpeaking, according to the manner of the Prophetic ſtyle, *Rev.* xiii. 6; where he Thus deſcribes Antichriſtian tyranny, perſecuting the True Worſhippers of God; *He opened his mouth*, ſaith he, *in Blaſphemy againſt God, to*

SERM. LXI.

blaſpheme his Name and his Tabernacle, and them that dwell in Heaven; *and it was given unto him to make war with the Saints, and to overcome them*; The ſame perſons who, in the *Latter* part of the Sentence, are called *Saints* under *Perſecution*, are in the *former* part of the ſame ſentence, *they that dwell in Heaven*; that is, who, by the practice of Virtue and true Holineſs are qualified for, (and are therefore with great elegance ſaid *actually to have*, what by the Promiſe of God they have a *certain Title to*,) an inheritance in *that new Heaven and new Earth, wherein righteouſneſs* is to *dwell for* ever.

The *Uſe*, which the Church of *Rome* has made of the Doctrine contained under *This* Head likewiſe, as well as the foregoing; has been extremely *corrupt* and *irreligious*. For inſtead *of imitating* the *Virtues and Examples* of the *Saints*, who have gone before them in the *Worſhip of the True God*, and in the Practice *of Righteouſneſs* and all *Holineſs*; they have on the contrary turned *This very thing* into an Occaſion *of Apoſtatizing* from *Chriſt*; and made *Idols* of the *Saints*, by cauſing *Them* after their Death, to become *Objects* of that Worſhip, which, while they *lived*, they both by their Doctrine and by their Practice taught, ſhould be paid *only to their common Lord*. Nor is there *any Colour* of Reaſon, in That *Excuſe* alledged by the Church of *Rome*; that they worſhip the Saints *no otherwiſe*, than by deſiring the Aſſiſtance *of Their Prayers* to *God*. For undoubtedly the *Heathen* of old, when they worſhipped *Dæmons* and *Heroes* or the *Souls of their departed Kings*, did not take thoſe *Dead men* to be *God Almighty*: And yet the Worſhip they paid them, *whatſoever* it was, becauſe it was paid to a mere *Fiction*, to an Object which either had *no Being* at all, or (however) which had *no Right to the Honour* they paid it, was always juſtly charged as the Crime of *Idolatry*. An *Idol*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *is Nothing in the world*: A mere *Fiction* of the Imagination of Vain Men; Either *totally* ſuch if the object has *no real exiſtence at all*; or *ſo far* ſuch, as there is paid to it any *religious Honour which does not* belong to it. That the *Saints departed* have *Any Knowledge at all* of our Affairs here upon Earth, is what no Argument can be brought to prove, either from Reaſon or Scripture: But if they could *know* and *hear the Prayers of Men*, yet that *They* who have not as yet been judged *themſelves*, (and of whom the *moſt righteous*, as St. *Peter* tells us, *ſhall ſcarcely be ſaved*, that is, ſhall owe their *own* Salvation merely to God's free *Pardon* of their Sins through Chriſt,) ſhould be allowed to mediate and be interceſſors for *Others*; is what *can* be *no* otherwiſe looked upon by ſerious perſons, than as an impious Fiction. *Angels*, who are *miniſtring Spirits ſent forth to miniſter to them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation*, we are ſure, *have* knowledge of our Affairs, and Always *behold the Face of our Heavenly Father* in That State of Glory, which the *Saints* ſhall *not* be inſtated in till the Great day of Retribution: And yet even of *Angel*-worſhip St. *Paul* declares, that it is *an intruding into things which men have not ſeen, vainly puffed up by their fleſhly mind*, falling away from *Chriſt* the *only Head of* reconciliation, and *beguiling themſelves of their Reward*: All which therefore, muſt *ſtill much more* be chargeable upon the Practice of *Saint-worſhip*. God has appointed *One only Mediator* between God and Men, who has perfect knowledge of our Infirmities, and is abundantly able to ſuccour them who come unto God by him: And for men to *idolize* either *Saints* or *Angels*, by ſetting them up, merely in their own imaginations, as *Interceſſors* for them with God, whom God never appointed to That Office; is a manifeſt derogation from the Honour of our *Lord*. This is evidently the State of the caſe, even though it were true, what ſome of the *Romaniſts* alledge, that they went no further than barely requeſting the Prayers of the Saints departed, to be offered unto God for them. But indeed they go much further; taking it for granted, that the Prayers of the Saints are undoubtedly very much available for their devout Votaries: And whereas our Saviour expreſly tells his Diſciples, that the *Greateſt Saints* are at the beſt *but unprofitable Servants*; theſe men teach on the contrary, that beſides working out their own Salvation, they have moreover a Stock of ſuperabundant Merit depoſited in the Church, to be applied for the Benefit of thoſe who want it. Which Notion has been carried to ſuch a Heighth of Extravagancy, in ſome Ages and Nations which call themſelves *Chriſtian*; that the deluded people, inſtead of loving the Lord their God with all their Heart and with all their Soul have been taught to rely with a more conſtant and more entire

tire confidence, upon the powerful Prayers and Merits of the *Holy Virgin* and the *Saints*; than upon the interceſſion of *Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, or the acceptableneſs of Virtue and True Holineſs in the preſence of *God the Judge of All*. SERM. LXI.

The *only Text* that I am ſenſible of in the whole New Teſtament, that can poſſibly be perverted to give ſo much as the leaſt appearance, even to the meaneſt Underſtanding, of countenancing the Doctrine of the *Merit of the Saints*; is That of St. *Paul*, Col. i. 24, *I rejoice in my ſufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt in my Fleſh, for his Body's ſake, which is the Church*. From which words it has been collected, that the afflictions and pious Works of particularly eminent Saints, are meritorious towards obtaining remiſſion of Sin, not only for *themſelves*, but for *Others* alſo; in *ſome* proportion as the Sufferings of Chriſt, were for the redemption of the *whole Church*. But the true meaning of St. *Paul*'s words, is plainly *This* only; that in like manner as it was foretold and appointed that *Chriſt*, the *Head* of the Church ſhould *firſt* ſuffer; ſo it was appointed that his *Body* alſo, the *Members* of his Church, ſhould in many degrees ſuffer *after* him; being *conformed to the Image of the Son of God*, and *through much tribulation entering into the Kingdom of God*. This is *filling up that which was Behind of the Sufferings of Chriſt*; accompliſhing that which remained to be *fulfilled*, of the fore-appointed *Sufferings*, firſt of *Chriſt*, and then of his *Church*.

The *real* Ground and Foundation of this *whole* Invention, of the *Saints in Heaven* being *helpful* to *Sinners upon Earth*; was nothing elſe, but the *Worldly profit* ariſing from this Doctrine to Thoſe, who claimed to themſelves the Power of diſpenſing out the *Merits* of the Saints *for Money*, and of enjoying the *rich Gifts and Preſents* offered to the Saints (in a grateful Return for their Prayers) by Superſtitious Votaries.

'Tis likewiſe upon the very ſame Foundation, with theſe *imaginary* Prayers of the *Dead* for the *Living*; that on the reverſe, great Endeavours have been uſed, to make the Prayers alſo of the *Living* thought available for the *Dead:* Men having been taught to believe, that Prayers purchaſed with Money to be ſaid for them after their *Death*, might avail inſtead of their having perfected True Repentance and Reformation in their *Lives*. Which being therefore indeed more *effectual* than the interceſſion of *Chriſt himſelf*, who obtains Forgiveneſs for *thoſe only* who *actually* repent and amend; hence it has come to paſs, that among men of wicked and corrupt minds, the imaginary Prayers of *Dead Saints* interceding for the *Living*, and *Maſſes ſaid by the Living* in behalf of the *Dead*; Fictions of vain and deceitful *Men*, have been more relied on, than the *everlaſting Goſpel of Chriſt*.

This is the perverſe and *corrupt* Uſe, which the Church *of Rome* has made of this plain Doctrine of the Apoſtle, that *good men on Earth* are Members of the *ſame City of God*, with the *Spirits of juſt men already made perfect in Heaven*. The *True and Chriſtian* Uſe of this doctrine, is That which the Apoſtle himſelf teaches us to make of it; that, if we look upon ourſelves as *Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God*; if we eſteem ourſelves as Members of the ſame Society with them, and belonging to the ſame heavenly country, the *Jeruſalem* which is above; then ought we *to ſet our affections on things above, not on things in the Earth*, Col. iii. 2; that our *Hearts* may be, where we believe is our *Treaſure*; conſidering, in every *important* action we go about, what influence it will have upon our *future and eternal*, rather than on our *preſent and temporal eſtate*; having *our* converſation *in Heaven*, as being *partakers of the ſame* Hope with thoſe who have gone before us, and who have already attained to *the inheritance of the Saints in Light*; Praiſing God, for *Their deliverance* from the Miſeries of this ſinful World; ſetting before us Their *Good Examples*, imitating their *Virtues*, and reſpecting their *Memories*; *Looking for*, and waiting unto, *the Bleſſed Hope, and the Glorious Appearance of the Great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; when *We* together with *Them*, who have gone before us in Chriſt, ſhall have our *perfect* Conſummation and Bliſs *both in Body and Soul*, in the eternal Kingdom of God: *We*, I ſay, *together with* Them, ſhall then receive our *perfect* Conſummation and Bliſs. For though, in the Text, *They* are ſtiled *already*, the *Spirits of juſt men made* perfect; yet This is ſpoken only with regard to their having *perfected* or *finiſhed their courſe*, and having eſcaped all the Dangers and Temptations of this preſent World. For as to the actual poſ-

ſeſſion

SERM. LXI.

ſeſſion of the *complete* Happineſs laid up for them in the Kingdom of God, in *This* they are *not* to be inſtated till the Reſurrection from the Dead: As the Apoſtle in the xi*th* chapter of this Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, ſpeaking of the Patriarchs and Martyrs of old, expreſly tells us, ver. 39. *Theſe all* (ſays he) *having obtained a good Report through Faith, received not the Promiſe; God having provided ſome better thing for us, that they without us ſhould not be made perfect.*

5*thly* and *Laſtly*; *Ye are come*, ſaith the Apoſtle in the Text, *to the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven.* The word, *firſt-born*, carries along with it, in common Speech, the Notion of a *Right of Inheritance*; and to be *written in Heaven*, or, *in the book of Life*, ſignifies being *qualified*, by a Life *of Virtue and true Righteouſneſs*, to be made *Partakers of* That Inheritance. Thus, *Rev.* xxii. 14, *Bleſſed are they that do his* Commandments, *that they may have* Right *to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates into the City.*) I ſay, To be *written in Heaven*, ſignifies; not, being unalterably *predeſtinated* unto Life; (for, *Him that ſinneth againſt me, will I* blot, ſaith God, *out of my Book*; and even *Judas* himſelf, before his Apoſtacy, was one of thoſe, to whom our Lord ſaid, *Luk.* x. 20, that *their Names were written in Heaven*;) but it denotes, men being *at preſent* true *children of God*, and if they *continue* ſuch unto the End, *actual Heirs of his Kingdom.* When therefore the Apoſtle ſays, *Ye are come unto the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven*; the Meaning is, as if he had ſaid; Ye are become Members of That Bleſſed, but at preſent Inviſible Society, which conſiſts of all the righteous and good men, who fear God and keep his Commandments, or who *have done* and *ſhall do ſo* through All Ages, and in all Nations over the Face of the whole Earth. This is the True *Catholick Church of God*, the Spouſe and Body of Chriſt. The Scripture-notion of which univerſal Church, having been much miſtaken by the ignorance of Some, and much perverted by the wickedneſs of Others; I ſhall therefore ſtill further and more diſtinctly endeavour to ſet That Matter in a clear Light in a following Diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON LXII.

Of the Catholick Church of Chriſt.

HEB. xii. 22, 23.

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, To the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of All, and to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the new Covenant.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words; I have already,

I. In the *Firſt* place, conſidered diſtinctly the ſeveral *Perſons*, whom the Apoſtle, in this his Deſcription of the City of the Living God, the heavenly *Jeruſalem*, ſuppoſes to have a *relation* to, and *Communion* with each other. There is, *1ſt*, ſays he, *God the Judge of All: 2dly, Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant: 3dly, An innumerable Company of Angels: 4thly, The Spirits of juſt men made perfect: 5thly, The general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven: Written in Heaven*; that is, not, *predeſtinated* unalterably unto Life;

SERM. LXII.

SERM. LXII.

Life; (for, *Him that ſinneth againſt me, will I* blot, ſaith God, *out of my Book*; and even *Judas* himſelf, before his Apoſtacy, was One of Thoſe to whom our Lord ſaid, *Luke* x. 20. That *their Names were written in Heaven*;) But *written in Heaven*, are they, who *at preſent* are *true children* of God, and, if they *continue* ſuch unto the End, ſhall be *actual Heirs of his Kingdom*.

Now this *laſt* Particular, *the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven*, being an expreſs *Definition* of the *True Catholick Church of God*, the Spouſe and Body of Chriſt; the right Notion of which univerſal Church, has been much miſtaken by the ignorance of Some, and much perverted by the Wickedneſs of Others: My

II. *Second* general Head therefore, (to which I am to proceed at This time,) was, from theſe words of the Apoſtle, to deduce the true Scripture-Notion of the *Holy Catholick Church of Chriſt*, and of That *Unity*, or *Communion*, which is between the Members of it, as Members of the *One Body of Chriſt*.

Now though the word *Catholick* is well known to ſignify, in general, the *Whole* or *Univerſal* Church; yet are there *ſeveral different* Senſes, wherein even this *general* Expreſſion, is taken in *greater* or in *leſs* Latitude of ſignification. The

1*ſt* and *largeſt* Senſe of the term *Catholick Church*, is that which appears to be the moſt obvious and *literal* Meaning of the words of the Text, *The general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven*; that is, the *whole Number* of thoſe who ſhall finally attain unto Salvation. According to that lively deſcription *St. John* gives of them, *Rev.* vii. 9. *I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all Nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtood before the Throne, —— and cried with a loud voice, ſaying, Salvation unto our God which ſitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.* Men being corrupted and depraved by Sin, could not *of themſelves*, conſiſtently with the infinite Holineſs of the Divine Nature, and the Honour of God's Righteous Laws, be admitted to have Acceſs unto *Him*, who *dwelleth in Light inacceſſible*, and *is of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity*. But through the *interceſſion* of the *Lamb ſlain from the Foundation of the World*; whom *God* from the Beginning promiſed by All his Holy Prophets, and in the fulneſs of Time actually *raiſed from the Dead*, and exalted into Heaven to the *right hand of the Throne on the Majeſty on High*, and *gave him a Name which is above every Name*, and *a Kingdom which ſhould never be deſtroyed*: Through *His* interceſſion, I ſay, All who forſake their Sins and amend their Lives, ſhall, conſiſtently with the Honour of the Divine Laws, be admitted to the Grace and Favour, of having their Repentance accepted unto Pardon. To *Him* God has given, (to become Subjects of that Kingdom which the Father has appointed him, and to be Partakers with him of his eternal Glory and Happineſs,) *All Thoſe* who by ſincere Repentance and true renewed Obedience, ſhall be found capable of applying to themſelves the Redemption purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt. *Behold*, ſaith he, *I and the Children which God has given me*, Heb. ii. 13. And *Luke* xxii. 29. *I appoint You a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.* Theſe are, in the *largeſt* and moſt *extenſive* Senſe of the word, the *Catholick Church* of God; *the General Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven:* All Holy and Virtuous Men, who in All Ages and in All Nations, have feared God and kept his Commandments, from the Beginning of the World. In *This* Bleſſed Aſſembly of the Sons of God, are comprehended all Thoſe, who, under the original and general Law of *Nature* only, thro' the *Love* of *Truth* and *Right*, of *God* and *Goodneſs*, have after the example of *Enoch* and *Noah*, of *Melchiſedec* and *Job*, of the *Patriarchs* and other Antient Heroes, *of whom the World was not worthy*, ſeparated themſelves from the corrupt Practices of the idolatrous and unrighteous Nations of the Earth; and they *ſhall* therefore, as our Saviour declares, *come from the Eaſt and from the Weſt and from the North and from the South, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God*, Mat. viii. 11; when *the Son of man ſhall ſend forth his Angels, and ſhall gather together his Elect from the four Winds, from one end of Heaven to the other*, Mat. xxiv. 13. For *God is no reſpecter of perſons*, Acts x. 34 *but in every Nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him.* Theſe therefore,

fore, together with All ſuch, as under the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation in particular obeyed the Law of *Moſes*, *waiting for the Hope and Redemption of Iſrael*; and all Thoſe in the *laſt* place, who, under the *Goſpel*-ſtate, ſincerely believe in the Name of Chriſt, and, *by patient continuance in well-doing*, according to the Commands of God delivered to them in the Goſpel, *ſeek for glory and honour and immortality*: Theſe *All*, conſidered *together*, as One united Body or Aſſembly of God's faithful Servants, are, in the moſt *true* and *primary* notion, in the *higheſt* and *largeſt* ſenſe of the word, *the Catholick* or *Univerſal Church of Chriſt*, his *Spouſe*, and his *Body*; his *Brethren*, and his *Members*; his *Sheep*, his *Inheritance*, and the *Subjects of his Kingdom*. *This* is that *Church*, which *Chriſt loved and gave himſelf for* it; that he might *ſanctify and cleanſe it*, *by the Word of God*; that he might *waſh it from its Sins*, *in his own Blood*; that he might *preſent it* to his Father *a glorious Church*, not having *ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing*, but that it ſhould be *Holy and without Blemiſh*, even *undefiled and faultleſs before the Throne of God*. *Theſe* are They, who ſhall *finally*, at their arrival in the *True Mount Sion*, *the City of the Living God*, *the Heavenly Jeruſalem*; make one complete and Bleſſed Society, with *an innumerable Company of Angels*, and with *Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, and with *GOD the Judge of All*: And in the *mean time*, the *Unity* or *Communion* which is between the Members of *This Univerſal Church* or *Family* of God, conſiſts in This; that they are All, Servants of the ſame Supreme King, the One *God* and *Father of the Univerſe*; all, redeemed by the Blood of the *ſame Saviour*, whether they *explicitly* knew of him, or *no*; all, guided and ſanctified by the *ſame Spirit*; all, Heirs of the *ſame Promiſes*, and have laid up for them a ſhare of the *ſame Glory*, not in the ſame *Degree*, but in different *degrees of the* ſame *Glory*, in the eternal *Kingdom of God*. SERM. LXII.

If then we ſincerely *believe* This, as we all *pretend and profeſs* to believe it; *what manner of perſons ought we* conſequently *to be*, *in all Holineſs and Godly Converſation*; (not regarding, in matters of Religion, the Doctrines and commandments of *Men*, but the Laws of *God* only;) that we may be worthy to be found *written in the writing of God's people*, Ezek. xiii. 9. (that is, as St. *John* expreſſes it, *in the Book of Life*;) and to have our portion of inheritance among thoſe Saints of the moſt High; being numbred together, in that general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born, with the Patriarchs and Prophets, with the Apoſtles, Martyrs and Confeſſors, and all righteous and juſt Men, who have lived and died in the Fear of God from the Foundation of the World.

2*dly*, The *Catholick* or *univerſal* Church, ſignifies in the *next* place, and indeed more *frequently*, the Chriſtian *Church* only: The *Chriſtian* Church, as *diſtinguiſhed* from that of the *Jews* and *Patriarchs* of old: the Church of *Chriſt*, ſpread *univerſally* from our Saviour's Days over *all the World*; in contradiſtinction to the *Jewiſh* Church, which was *particularly* confined to *One Nation* or People. And in *This* ſenſe, the *Holy Catholick Church* ſignifies *That inſtitution of Chriſtianity*, or *Society of men profeſſing the Doctrine of the Goſpel*; which being built upon the *Foundation* of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, (in which ſenſe our Saviour emphatically ſtiles St. *Peter* a *Rock*, or principal *Foundation-ſtone*;) is by a continued Succeſſion of their Diſciples and Followers propagated in the *Preaching of Truth* and in the *Practice* of *Righteouſneſs* through all Ages, without any total Interruption, unto the End of the World. *This* is that Church, which Chriſt has promiſed to be Always with, and to preſerve it, that the *Gates of Hell*, that is, *Perſecution* and *Tyranny* and even *Death itſelf* ſhall never be able to prevail againſt it. *This* is That Church, which though continually *oppoſed* by *Unbelievers* on the *one* hand, and on the *other* hand *perſecuted* by the ſeveral *Religions* and *Powers* of the *World* that calls itſelf *Chriſtian*; though corrupted by *falſe Doctrines* and *Determinations* of *Men*, diſtracted by *mutual Impoſitions* and *Schiſms*, and moſt of all deformed by *temporal Proſperity*, by the mixture of *Ambition* and *worldly Power*, and by the *vitious Lives* of thoſe who pretend to be its Members; yet ſhall finally ſo prevail, that at length the *Kingdoms of the World*, *ſhall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt*; and the *Knowledge of God ſhall fill the Earth*, *as the Waters cover the Sea*; and the *everlaſting Goſpel* ſhall be preached to all Nations, *ſaying*, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. *Worſhip him that made Heaven and Earth and the Sea*, and all that is therein.

The

SERM. LXII.

The *Unity* or *Communion* which is between the Members of *this Church of* Christ, ſpread over the World from the days of our Saviour to the Conſummation of all things, and conſidered as *diſtinct* from the *Jewiſh Church*, and *That of the Patriarchs of old* I ſay, the Unity of *its* Members conſiſts further in This; that they are, not only Servants of the *ſame God*, and Heirs of the *ſame Promiſes*, (for ſo were the *Jews* and *Patriarchs*, and All the *Worthies* of Antient Ages;) but Theſe have Communion moreover, in *profeſſing* particularly the *ſame* explicit *Faith in Chriſt*, of whom the Antients had but an *obſcure* expectation as of Him that was to come; they have a Communion or Unity, as being *Members* of Chriſt's *peculiar myſtical Body, of his Fleſh and of his Bones*, Eph. v. 30. as being united, under the ſame *Head*; as being governed, by the ſame *Laws*; as communicating, (though they live in very *different Ages* and *Countries* of the World,) in the ſame *Ordinances of the Goſpel*, in the offering up of *Prayers to God thro' Chriſt*, in the *Miniſtration* of the ſame *Word*, and the *Participation* of the ſame *Sacraments*: According to that elegant deſcription given by St. *Paul*, Eph. ii. 20. *Ye are built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone, In whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord.*

3*dly*, The *Catholick Church* ſignifies very frequently, in a ſtill more *particular* and *reſtrained* ſenſe, *that Part* of the *univerſal* Church of Chriſt, which in the *preſent Age* is *Now* living upon Earth; as diſtinguiſhed from thoſe which have been *before*, and ſhall come *after*. And in *This* ſenſe, the word ſignifies the Preſent *True Members of Chriſt*, whereſoever they be diſperſed, or howſoever diſtinguiſhed, over the Face of the whole Earth. *This* is the *Preſent Church Militant*, the *Inviſible* Church known only to God the ſearcher of Hearts; who among Chriſtians of all Nations, and of different Rites and Ceremonies and Forms of Government, and of great Diverſity of Opinions in matters not fundamental, that is, not covenanted for at Baptiſm; knows *who* they are that worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth, and obey the Goſpel with Simplicity and Sincerity of Heart. This is the *inviſible* Catholick Church, the only *true Church upon Earth* in the Sight of *God*; but not diſtinguiſhable by *Us*, who know not each others Hearts, and therefore very often cannot poſſibly diſtinguiſh between the hypocrite and the ſincere.

For which reaſon, between the Members of this True *Inviſible* Church, there cannot poſſibly be, in this preſent Life, any *diſtinct* and *ſeparate Communion*; till, at the great day of Retribution, the All-ſeeing and Unerring Judge, ſhall finally and for ever ſeparate the Sheep from the Goats.

4*thly and laſtly*; The Term, *Catholick Church*, ſignifies in the *laſt* place, and *moſt frequently of all*, That Part of the Univerſal Church of Chriſt, which in the preſent Generation is *Viſible* upon Earth, in an *Outward* Profeſſion of the Belief of the Goſpel, and in a *viſible external* Communion of the Word and Sacraments. *This* is That Church, which, in our preſent imperfect State, we are forced very improperly and promiſcuouſly to judge and ſpeak of, as if the *Viſible* and *Inviſible*, the *Apparent* and the *Real* Church of Chriſt, were one and the ſame Body of Men, actually united in the Communion of Saints. This is That Great *Field*, ſo ſtiled by our Saviour in his Parable, wherein grows together the *Corn* and the *Tares*: This is that *Net*, deſcribed by him in another parable; wherein are incloſed both *Good Fiſh* and *Bad*. This is the *mixt* Society of *ſincere Chriſtians* and *Hypocrites*, who ſhall not be ſeparated till the End of the World.

The Church of *Rome*, pretends herſelf to be *This Whole Catholick Church*, excluſive of All other Societies of Chriſtians. Which is the very *ſame* contradiction, as for a *ſingle Member*, nay, for a Member after it has *cut itſelf off* from the Body, confidently to call itſelf the *Whole Body*.

Marks alſo, or *Notes*, they pretend to give; whereby, as by a certain Teſt, Men may eaſily diſtinguiſh the *True* Catholick Church, from all that are *erroneous*.

One of theſe *Marks* of Theirs, is *Viſibility*; that is, *Temporal Grandeur* and *Proſperity*, founded upon *Worldly Power* and *Dominion*: Which the *Scripture*, on the

the contrary makes one of the *Great Marks* of *Antichriſt*, compelling by Force of Perſecution all the World to worſhip him, that is, to make profeſſion of *His* Religion: *Rev.* xviii. 7, 3. *She hath glorified herſelf, and lived deliciouſly; —— ſhe ſaith in her Heart, I ſit a Queen, —— and ſhall ſee no ſorrow: — All Nations have drunk of the Wine of — her fornication, and the Kings of the Earth have committed fornication with her* (that is, have ſupported her idolatrous religion;) and the Merchants of the Earth are *waxed rich through the abundance of her Delicacies.* SERM. LXII.

Another Mark they give us of the *True* Church, is *Univerſality*; By which they mean, a *large Extent of Country*: Not conſidering, that *Mahometaniſm* and *Paganiſm* are much ſuperior to them in *This* reſpect: And if they were *not*, yet our Saviour ſeems to have had no great Opinion of This way of judging of *Truth* by *Numbers*; when he tells us that *Wide is the Gate, and Broad is the Way that leadeth to Deſtruction, and Many there be go in thereat.*

Another Mark of the *True* Church, they tell us, is *Antiquity*: By which they mean, not *Antiquity indeed*, not the *Primitive Antiquity* of Chriſt and his Apoſtles; but only ſeveral *paſt* corrupt Ages; which, with reſpect to *Us Now* indeed, are *Antient*; but, with reſpect to the *Goſpel itſelf*, were very *late Innovations.*

Laſtly; *Another* Mark they give us of the *True* Church, is *Miracles*: Which were indeed *Authentick Evidences* of our *Saviour*'s divine Commiſſion, and of his *Apoſtles* after him: But *miraculous Powers*, extended not any further than to *Their* perſons; and to thoſe immediately impowered by them in the firſt Age: And as to the *pretended Miracles*, which began in the *Fourth Century* about the Time of St. *Anthony* the Monk, and have continued ever ſince in the Church of *Rome*; the Character the Scripture gives of *Them*, is This; 2 *Th.* ii. 8. *Then ſhall that wicked one be revealed, — whoſe coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power and Signs and lying Wonders, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh; becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth; — for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a Lye:* And Rev. xiii. 13. *He doth great Wonders, — and deceiveth them that dwell on the Earth, by the means of thoſe Miracles which he had Power to do*: According to that original Prophecy of our Saviour, *Matt.* xxiv. 24. *There ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhew great Signs and Wonders.*

All things therefore of This kind, are mere cheats and deluſions. And indeed *Marks*, or *Notes*, of the *true Church*, there are *None* other, but *This One only*; the adhering ſtedfaſtly to the plain and uncorrupted Doctrine of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, as delivered in their *own* Diſcourſes and Writings. *Where-ever* This is the Caſe, *There* is the *True Church*; even though but *Two* or *Three* be *gathered together*, to worſhip God in *Chriſt's Name*, and according to *his* Command. And *where-ever* This is *not* the Caſe, *There* is *no True Church*; even tho' it were as *Catholick* or Univerſal as the *whole World.*

The Church of *Rome* therefore, and, in proportion, all its Followers, whether in whole or in part, by mixing the Authority of *Popes*, and *Councils*, and *Vain Men*, with the pure Doctrine of Chriſt; have, like the *Jews* of old, by the *Traditions of Men*, made void the *Commandments of God*; and are thereby become That *Man of Sin*, (of whom the Apoſtles have foretold us,) *ſitting* blaſphemouſly *in the Seat* and *Temple of God*, and *changing Laws and Times*, and *commanding all Men to worſhip* his Temporal Authority.

The *True* and *Real* Authority of the Church of Chriſt, is to be a *Witneſs and Keeper of Holy Writ*; to tranſmit it down uncorrupted from generation to generation, as the *only Rule* of *Faith* and *Manners*; and in matters of indifference, in Rites and Ceremonies and Forms of external Government, to take care that *all things be done decently and in Order.* In which matters, the *univerſal Church* being too large to have any poſſibility of conſulting together, *the Church in every Nation* Therefore has the ſame Right and Authority to determine for *itſelf*, as the *Catholick Church*, if it were poſſible for it to come together in One, would have to determine for the *Whole.* Which

SERM. LXII.

Power or *Authority*, in Matters of *Doctrine* indeed, that is, in appointing the Terms or Conditions of Salvation, is *none at all*; Not only in any *particular* Church, but even in the *Whole Catholick Church collectively*; nay, even in the *Apoſtles* themſelves; nay, if we will believe St. *Paul*; even in an *Angel from Heaven*, it is *abſolutely None at all*; For *if any man ſhall* add *to Theſe things, God ſhall add unto Him the Plagues that are written in His Book*; and *if any man ſhall take away* therefrom, *God ſhall take away his part out of the book of Life, and out of the Holy City*. But in *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, in the *Manner* and Circumſtance of *Governments*, and *all matters of external Form*, which God hath left *indifferent*; in *Theſe* things, the Authority of *Men* takes properly place: And *herein* every good man ought to comply willingly, with the Laws and Cuſtoms of the Government he lives under: Always remembring this One Rule, that, with regard to theſe *outward and indifferent* things, they who make Diviſions in the Church of Chriſt, either by needleſly ſeparating *Themſelves*, or, thro' needleſs and imperious impoſitions, giving to *Others* any Ground or Occaſion of Separating; are on *Both ſides equally* guilty of a *Schiſmatical Spirit*. For ſo St. *Paul* admoniſhes, *Rom.* xvi. 17. *Mark them which cauſe Diviſions and Offences*. He does not ſay, Mark *Them only*, who *divide*; Which is the Fault on *One* ſide: But alſo, *Mark them who give* occaſion to Diviſions; Which is equally the Fault on the *Other* ſide.

For the *Unity* or *Communion*, which ought to be between the Members of the *Viſible Church Catholick*, conſiſts in This; that, with univerſal Love and Charity, with mutual Forbearance and Good-Will, they aſſiſt, inſtruct, comfort, reprove, forgive one another; and, in a word, (notwithſtanding any Differences of Opinion in ſmaller matters,) perform all the Offices of Kindneſs and Goodneſs, that becomes Members of One and the Same Body to do for each other. That the *Members ſhould* all have the *ſame Care one for another*; *and if one member ſuffer, all the Members ſhould* by Compaſſion *ſuffer with it*, 1 Cor. xii. 25. That the *Eye cannot ſay to the Hand, I have no need of Thee*; *nor again, the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you*, ver. 21. That Great Care ſhould always be taken, not to lay a *Foundation* for *Schiſms and Diviſions*, by aſſuming Authority to *impoſe* upon each other as *Neceſſary*, ſuch Matters either of *Opinion* or *Practice*, as Chriſt has *not* made *neceſſary*. The *attempting* of which, has in all Ages been the fulfilling of That Prophecy of our Saviour, *I come not to ſend Peace, but a Sword*. For the *True Unity* of Chriſtians does not depend, (as ſome have vainly imagined) upon procuring by Force an *Uniformity of Opinions*; (which to be *real*, is abſolutely impoſſible in *Nature*; and the *Appearance* of it, can never be any thing elſe than *Ignorance* or *Hypocriſy*:) But the *True Unity* of Chriſtians depends upon their Agreement in the ſincere *Love of Truth*, and *Practice of Charity*; *bearing each others Infirmities* in all things that are of an *indifferent* nature, and being *ſtedfaſt* and unmoveable in things *fundamental*, that is, in the *Faith and Obedience* for which they *covenanted at Baptiſm*; *holding the Head*, Col. ii. 19, *from which all the Body by Joints and Bands having Nouriſhment miniſtred, and knit together, increaſeth with the Increaſe of God*. If we *walk in the Light* of the Goſpel, we *muſt* have This *Fellowſhip* one with another. For he that ſaith, he *loves God*, and *loveth not his Brother*, St. *John* tells us, *is a Lyar*. Nay, St. *Paul* goes farther, and declares, that if a man could *ſpeak with the Tongues of men and Angels*, and *had all Faith ſo that he could remove mountains*, and *gave his Body to be burned*, and beſtowed *all his goods to feed the Poor*, and *had not Charity*, (that is, had not that good and Chriſtian Spirit, which would hinder him from putting *impoſitions* upon his Brethren, which are the *Occaſions* of dividing the Body of Chriſt;) all the reſt would *profit him Nothing*. With *one thing* indeed, with *Vice and Immorality* only we are to have *No Charity*: Have *No Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs*; *neither be Partakers of other men's Sins*; For *what Communion has Light with Darkneſs, or what fellowſhip has Chriſt with Belial?* But beyond This, our Saviour has given us no Authority to go; leſt by a miſtaken zeal, we *needleſly pluck up the Wheat with the Tares*. For *good* men are not hurt, by living *in Communities*, with the *Wicked*, but only by joining with them in any *Sin*. In all *other* reſpects, we are to ſhow tenderneſs to all men; to inſtruct, rebuke, or bear with them as *Brethren*: Conſidering, that as there is *One Body and One Spirit*, — *and one Hope of our Calling*,

One

SERM. LXII.

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptiſm, One God and Father of All, who is above All; ſo we ought to *indeavour* with all *forbearance* towards one another *in Love, to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*: That we may *grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Chriſt; From whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by That which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the Body unto the edifying of itſelf in Love. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.* By *This* Rule, if we walk here upon *Earth*; we may hope finally to be numbred in That *general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born, which are written in Heaven: with Angels*, and *with* Jeſus *the Mediator of the New covenant*, and to *come to* God *in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of Joy*, and at *whoſe right hand are pleaſures for evermore.*

SERMON

SERMON LXIII.

Of the Number of thoſe that ſhall be ſaved.

REV. iii. 4.

Thou haſt a few Names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their Garments; and they ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

SERM. LXIII.

WHETHER theſe Epiſtles of our Saviour to the Seven Churches of *Aſia*, are to be underſtood *literally* only, as Exhortations to thoſe Seven particular Churches; or whether, according to the Analogy of the reſt of This Book, they are to be applied in the prophetick ſtile to Seven different States, Succeſſions, or Periods, of the Whole Church of Chriſt; is not material to our preſent Purpoſe to inquire. The Matter contained in theſe Admonitions, may by a Moral Application, become equally uſeful to us, upon *either* Suppoſition. For, what St. *Paul* affirms concerning the State of the ancient *Jewiſh* Church; that the things which befel *them*, were *our* Examples, and were writ for *our* Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come;

is

SERM. LXIII.

is undoubtedly much *more* true, of the things relating to the Antient *Chriſtian* Church, whether particular or univerſal. Theſe Exhortations therefore of our Saviour, whether given to the *ſingle* Churches of *Aſia*, or intended to be applied to the ſeveral Succeſſive Periods of the *Catholick* Church; are either way worthy of our moſt ſerious meditations. The Subject-matter of each of the ſeven Epiſtles is very nearly the ſame; conſiſting of three parts; A Commendation of the Faith and Patience of the Saints, a Reproof of their Defects, and an Exhortation either to Amendment, or Perſeverance. The State of the Church of *Sardis* is repreſented as one of the *moſt* reproveable of the ſeven; and therefore the Epiſtle to *This* Church does not begin, as moſt of the others do, with a Commendation of their Faith and Patience, but on the contrary with a very ſevere Reproof; ver. 1, *I know thy Works, that thou haſt a Name, that thou liveſt, and art dead.* Then follows the Exhortation to repent, ver. 2, *Be watchful and ſtrengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy Works perfect before God: Remember therefore how thou haſt received and heard, and hold faſt, and repent.* After which he adds in the laſt place that ſmall Commendation which could be allowed to ſo imperfect a Church, in the Words of the Text: *Nevertheleſs thou haſt a Few Names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their Garments, and They ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* It might reaſonably be hoped, that, in a careleſs and corrupt Age, it ſhould be an awakening Conſideration to All who have any true Concern for the Glory of God, and for the Honour and Purity of Religion; to think within themſelves, if in the beſt and pureſt Times of the Goſpel, if in thoſe Primitive Ages, and among thoſe moſt eminent Churches of *Aſia*, there was One to which no better Commendation could be afforded, than that there were in it a *Few* Names which had not defiled their Garments; what Apprehenſions will it become *Us* to have of ourſelves, in theſe laſt and degenerate Ages, when our Works are *not only Ready to die*, but actually *dead*; nay, when we ſcarce have ſo much as a *Name that we live?* when on the One hand by open Atheiſm, Irreligion and Profaneneſs, and on the Other hand by ignorant and ſuperſtitious Contentions about vain, needleſs and unintelligible Opinions, the Life and Soul of Religion, true Devotion and Piety towards God, and Univerſal Righteouſneſs, Love and Good-will towards Men, is in a manner wholly eaten out and conſumed? If in the Primitive Church itſelf, *Judgment* thus *began at the Houſe of God, what muſt the End be of them that obey not the Goſpel* at all; *And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* But This I imitate only, as a *general* Obſervation upon the *Whole*. In the *Words themſelves* we may more diſtinctly obſerve the following *Particulars*. 1*ſt*, The *Number* or Proportion of thoſe, who ſhall inherit Salvation; *Thou haſt a* Few *names even in Sardis:* 2*dly*, The *Qualification* by which they are entitled to that inheritance; *Which have not defiled their Garments:* 3*dly*, The *Nature* or Deſcription of the Reward promiſed them; *They ſhall walk with me in White:* And 4*thly*, The *Character* or Encomium given to the perſons who ſhall obtain this inheritance; *For they are Worthy.*

1*ſt*, Here is expreſſed the *Number* or Proportion of thoſe who ſhall inherit Salvation; *Thou haſt a* Few *names even in Sardis*: The ſtrict and proper intention of which Words in this place, ſeems to be to declare, that even in *Sardis*, tho' one of the moſt corrupt of all the Seven Churches, yet even in *That* Church there were *ſome* who ſhould be Heirs of Salvation: Implying, that in the other Churches there were *more*, and in a much *greater Proportion*, when there were a *Few* found even in that, which was one of the worſt of all. But yet, ſince the evil things which are ſpoken of the Church of *Sardis*, are but comparative with regard to the Purity of the other more uncorrupt Churches; and That primitive Church, with all its Faults, was ſtill one of the golden Candleſticks, and of the ſeven Stars in our Saviour's right Hand; with which the Things that are moſt highly commended in theſe later and more degenerate Ages of the Chriſtian World, muſt hardly preſume to be compared: Therefore our Saviour's declaring that in *One*, even of *Theſe* Churches, there were *but Few* who ſhould walk with him in White, may juſtly give us occaſion to conſider the ſeveral Texts of Scripture, wherein ſeems to be contained that melancholy Doctrine, that there are

SERM. LXIII.

Few only which ſhall attain unto Salvation. In the ſecond Apocryphal Book of *Eſdras*, there is a very ſtrange expreſſion to this Purpoſe, ch. viii. 1, *The moſt High*, ſays he, *has made this World for many, but the World to come for Few*: For as *the Earth giveth much mold whereof Earthen Veſſels are made, but little duſt that gold cometh of; even ſo is the Courſe of this preſent World; there be many created, but Few ſhall be ſaved*: And ch. ix. 15, *There be many more of them which periſh, than of them which ſhall be ſaved, Like as a Wave is greater than a Drop.* Our Saviour himſelf, when *one asked him, Lord, are there few that be ſaved*; took that occaſion to exhort his Diſciples, ſaying, *Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate*; For, *ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and Few there be that find it*: And at the Concluſion of two of his Parables, he ſums up his Doctrine twice in the very ſame Words; *For many are called, but Few choſen.* The Apoſtle St. *Peter* compares our being ſaved by the Goſpel, to the preſervation of *Noah* and his Family from the Flood; and makes *Baptiſm* a *like Figure to* the *Ark, wherein Few, that is, eight Perſons, were ſaved by Water*, 1 Pet. iii. 20. And *Rev.* xiii. 8, *All that dwell upon the Earth ſhall worſhip him, whoſe names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world*: That is; the Generality of Chriſtians who are not ſincerely ſuch, will always run after the Religions of this World, inſtead of ſtudying the Doctrines which Chriſt himſelf taught them. St. *Paul*, *Rom.* ix. 27, applies to the Salvation of the *Goſpel*, that paſſage of *Iſaiah*, *Though the Number of the children of Iſrael be as the Sand of the Sea, a remnant ſhall be ſaved.* And as in *Elijah*'s time there were in all *Iſrael ſeven thouſand men, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal*; *Even ſo*, ſaith he, *at this preſent time alſo there is a remnant, according to the election of Grace*, ch. xi. at the 4th verſe. Theſe may juſtly ſeem to be *hard ſayings*, and *Who can bear them?* For if theſe things be ſo, *Who then ſhall be ſaved*? And how ſhall this be reconciled with thoſe Divine Attributes, the Goodneſs, the Mercy, and Compaſſion of God; of whom the Scripture declares, that he *would have* all *men to be ſaved*, that he *would not that* Any *ſhould periſh*, and that his *tender mercies are over* all *his Works*? Now to This Difficulty it might be ſufficient to anſwer in general, that at the great day of Retribution, God will abundantly vindicate himſelf before Men and Angels, and all *Mouths ſhall be ſtopped before him*: Stopped, not by Power and ſupreme Authority, but by conviction of the Juſtice, the Reaſon, the Equity, the Neceſſity of the Caſe: By all which things, God will *be juſtified in his ſaying*; *and clear*, both *when he judges* and when *he is judged*. This, I ſay, is in the whole a ſufficient ground of Satisfaction, (even though nothing further could be alledged,) to a rational, pious, and modeſt Mind, who can *truſt* God till the final event of Things, to make it appear at laſt, that *the Judge of all the Earth will do what is right*. And indeed it may univerſally be looked upon as a never-failing Rule, which may in all caſes ſafely be depended upon; that where-ever any Notion we entertain, is in any degree inconſiſtent with any of the natural and unchangeable Attributes of the Divine Nature, there is always either ſome latent Error in the Notion itſelf, which at preſent perhaps we cannot diſtinctly diſcover; or at leaſt, there is ſome great Defect in our Knowledge of ſeveral very material *Circumſtances*, which in reality alter the nature of the whole Queſtion. Upon the Whole therefore, we ought in all reaſon to reſt ſatisfied, with being able to affirm, that God will finally juſtify his own proceeding to every man's Conſcience, and *with righteouſneſs will he judge the World*. Yet in the matter at preſent before us, there is ſomething *further* both *in general*, of conſiderable moment, that we are capable of obſerving; and alſo *in particular* ſomething remarkable, with regard to *each* of the fore-mentioned Texts of Scripture.

Luk. xiii. 23. Mat. vii. 14. Matt. xx. 16. xxii. 14.

In general: We know it was reaſonable God ſhould create Beings, endued with *Freedom of Will*, that they might be capable of rendring him a *Free-will-offering* of voluntary *Obedience*; which is the only thing that can poſſibly be acceptable to a Supreme Governour. Now by the very ſame *Liberty*, which rendred them capable of paying a voluntary *Obedience*, they muſt needs be capable likewiſe of *refuſing to obey*: And thence came Sin and Miſery into the Creation of God. Further: It was fit, that infinite Power and Wiſdom ſhould diſplay itſelf in making great *Variety* of ſuch Creatures. In which *Variety*, it could not be, but of thoſe which were the loweſt and fraileſt and moſt fallible of all rational Beings, *greater Numbers* ſhould

prove

prove incapable of the Heavenly ſtate; and conſequently muſt periſh. *Muſt periſh:* Not by the Appointment of God; (For God made not Death; neither hath he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the Living; but invites all men to come and take of the Water of Life freely;) but they periſh, by their own Careleſneſs and Senſuality, by their own Diſobedience, Wilfulneſs and Impenitency; being unfit for, and incapable of the Happineſs of Heaven. And yet even of thoſe who ſo periſh, not *All* are condemned to the ſevere Puniſhment of *Thoſe*, concerning whom it is ſaid that it ſhall be more tolerable for *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* in the day of Judgment than for *Them*; But every one ſhall be puniſhed according to the exact *Degree only* of his own demerit; ſome with *few* ſtripes, (as our Saviour declares to us,) and others with *many*; according as the Juſtice and *Wiſdom* of God in his Supreme Government of the World neceſſarily requires, for the ſupport of his Authority, and the honour of his righteous and eternal Laws. SERM. LXIII.

This, *in general*. There *is* in *particular* ſomething proper to be remarked, with regard to *each* of the forementioned paſſages in Scripture.

In the *firſt* place, the Smallneſs of the Numbers there mentioned, is not *abſolute*, but *comparative*. The Righteous are *Few*, not abſolutely ſpeaking; but *in Compariſon only* with thoſe who are Wicked. For otherwiſe, where the Expreſſions are not comparative, the Scripture ſpeaks after a very different manner: *I beheld*, ſays St. *John* in his Viſion, Rev. vii. 9, *and lo a great multitude which no man could number, of all Nations and Kindreds and People and Tongues, ſtood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms were in their hands.* And yet This great Multitude were of Thoſe only, who were ſaved out of the Antichriſtian State, out of that great and univerſal Corruption, which was to overſpread the Church in its loweſt and moſt oppreſſed Condition; ver. 14, *Theſe are they which came out of great Tribulation*, (out of The *great Tribulation*, it ſhould be rendred,) *and have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.* Rev. xiii. 8.

In the next place; 'tis to be obſerved, that ſeveral of the Texts before-cited, are parts of Parabolical Diſcourſes; in which Parables, there muſt not be a ſtrict Application made of every ſingle Expreſſion, but of That only, or principally, wherein the Similitude conſiſts, and which is the main intent of this Parable. Thus the intent of theſe Two Parables, which our Saviour concludes with theſe Words, *Many are called, but few choſen*; is not to expreſs the Proportion of the *Numbers*, of thoſe that ſhall be ſaved, and of thoſe that periſh; but to declare, that *as* the Perſon who came without a Wedding-garment, was caſt out from the Marriage-Feaſt, *ſo* no man who comes not clothed with the Works of Righteouſneſs, ſhall be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, to the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb: And that, *as* the Labourers who came into the Vineyard in the Morning, were not preferred to thoſe who came in later, but on the contrary reproved for their envying and complaining at the Favour ſhown to others; *ſo* the Jews who were firſt and originally the people of God, ſhould not be preferred before the Gentiles who were converted later; but on the contrary many of *them* ſhould be rejected for their ill behaviour, while others from the Eaſt and from the Weſt, from the North and from the South, of all Nations, Kingdoms and Tongues, ſhould come and ſit down in *Their* places, with *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob* in the Kingdom of God. From whence our Saviour draws, by way of Inference, this warning to his Diſciples, that they ſhould not depend upon the bare outward Profeſſion of the true Religion; for that *Many of thoſe who were called, were not choſen.* And from his manner of expreſſing this Warning at the Concluſion of theſe Parables, (*Many are called, but Few choſen*;) it ought no more in ſtrictneſs to be inferred, that, abſolutely ſpeaking, *Few* only ſhall attain unto Salvation; than from what he elſewhere ſuppoſes, that of *Ten* Virgins *Five* were wiſe, and *Five* fooliſh, it can be concluded that the Numbers of Both are *equal*: Or from the Parable of the Talents, wherein to one Servant were committed *Five* talents, to another *Two*, to a third *One*; and of theſe This *Laſt only* misbehaved himſelf; that therefore the Righteous are *more* in number, than the Wicked: Or from the Parable of the Marriage-Feaſt, wherein of Thoſe who were invited, and called out of the high-ways and ſtreets of the City, and even compelled to come in, *One only* among them all is repreſented as not having on a Wedding-garment; that therefore it can be concluded the Number of thoſe who ſhall finally be rejected,

is

SERM. LXIII.

is extremely ſmall. All theſe Arguments, I ſay, from Parabolical Diſcourſes, are without juſt Foundation: The Deſign of our Saviour being evidently, not to expreſs the *Proportions* of *Numbers*, but the *Qualification* of the *Perſons* that ſhall attain unto Salvation; and to warn his Diſciples, againſt depending, like the Phariſees, upon the bare *Profeſſion* of the true Religion, without the *Practice* of it: For that many of the Children of the Kingdom, ſhould *themſelves* be caſt out, and *many* of them that *are called*, are not *choſen*. And 'tis worthy of Remark, that it is at the End of that *very* Parable, wherein *One Perſon only* is repreſented as not having on a Wedding-garment, that our Saviour expreſſes his Caution in thoſe particular Words, *Many are called, but Few are choſen*. Which therefore muſt by no means be underſtood to be a Diſcouragement, as if any Sincere perſon were, by any Act of *God*, excluded or rejected from Salvation; but it muſt be interpreted as a Complaint, of the Wickedneſs and Preverſeneſs of *Men*; that of thoſe who are *called* to the greateſt Advantages and Means of Salvation, ſo *Many* prove unworthy of being finally *choſen*.

As to the paſſages in the Apocryphal Book of *Eſdras*, which is the Book that has the *leaſt* Authority even of all the Apocryphal Books themſelves; they ſeem to be the Expreſſions of a Jewiſh Writer, who thought that as the Jews were in *This* World the peculiar People of God, ſo no others but They were to have any ſhare likewiſe in the World *to come*. Which was a Notion the Jews ſo far retained even till our Saviour's time, that there was nothing in the Goſpel more difficult for them to be perſwaded of, than that even *unto the Gentiles alſo God had Granted Repentance unto Life*. And yet even This very *Same* Author elſewhere expreſly acknowledges, that not by the Appointment of *God*, but by the Wickedneſs only and Incapacity of *Men*, is their own Deſtruction brought upon them. Ch. viii. 41, *As the husbandman ſoweth much Seed upon the ground, and planteth many Trees, and yet the thing that is ſown good in his Seaſon cometh not up, neither doth all that is planted take root; even ſo is it of them that are ſown in the World, they ſhall not all be Saved*. And ch. ix. 20, *So I conſidered the World, and behold there was peril, becauſe of the* Devices *that were come into it; And I ſaw and ſpared it greatly; and have kept me a Grape of the Cluſter, and a Plant of a great People*.

The Paſſage in St. *Peter*, wherein he makes *Baptiſm* a *like Figure to the Ark, wherein Few, that is, Eight Perſons, were ſaved by Water*, may reaſonably be underſtood of that *particular Time* of Perſecution and Difficulty, wherein the Apoſtle lived. For in like manner as at the Time of the Flood, *God ſaw that the Wickedneſs of Man was great in the Earth, and that every Imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5: Which character 'tis very unreaſonable to apply (as ſome have done) to the whole Race of Mankind, when it was plainly ſpoken of that particular corrupt generation only: So 'tis reaſonable to ſuppoſe St. *Peter*'s Application of the ſimilitude, to be made not to the whole Bulk of Mankind, but to that particular generation, wherein *Few* entertained the firſt preaching of the *Goſpel*, even like the *Few* that hearkned to *Noah*'s preaching of Righteouſneſs. And the ſame is to be underſtood concerning that Text in the *Revelation*, ch. xiii. 8.

In like manner St. *Paul*'s applying to the Salvation of the *Goſpel*, that paſſage of *Iſaiah*, *Though the Number of the children of Iſrael be as the Sand of the Sea, a remnant ſhall be ſaved*; and his affirming, that as in *Elijah*'s time there were in all *Iſrael ſeven thouſand men, who had not bowed the knee to the Image of Baal, even ſo at this* preſent Time *alſo there is a remnant according to the election of Grace*; This, I ſay, is by the Apoſtle's own expreſs Words limited to that *particular Time then preſent*, wherein *Few* in compariſon embraced the Goſpel: *Even ſo at* this preſent Time, ſays he, *alſo there is a remnant according to the election of Grace*; i. e. of thoſe who embrace the gracious Terms of the Goſpel. And as in the *Old Teſtament* there were expreſs Prophecies, that things ſhould not always be in ſuch a melancholy ſtate, but on the contrary the Time ſhould come when God's *People* ſhould *be All righteous*, Iſ. lx. 21; that he would *make* even their *Officers Peace*, and their *Exactors Righteouſneſs*, ver. 17; that the *Earth* ſhould *be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Seas*, ch. xi. 9; that God would *put his Law in their inward parts, and write it in their* Hearts; and that *they* ſhould

all

all *Know* him, *from the leaſt of them to the greateſt*, Jer. xxxi. 33; So in the *New Teſtament* alſo 'tis expreſly declared, that the Time will come, when all *Iſrael ſhall be ſaved*, Rom. xi. 26; *i. e.* the Whole, or main Body, of the People ſhall be converted unto God: and *Rev.* xi. 15, *The Kingdoms of this World ſhall become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt; and he ſhall reign for ever and ever.* And therefore 'tis probable, that even thoſe Words likewiſe of our Lord himſelf, (*ſtraight is the Gate and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and Few there be that find it,*) are ſpoken principally of thoſe Times of Difficulty and Perſecution, wherein no man could embrace the Goſpel of Chriſt, without immediately parting with all he had in the World. For ſo the Word which we render, Narrow *is the way*, in the Original ſignifies *Afflicted*, or *Perſecuted* is the way, that leadeth unto Life. And then it will be of the ſame import with that Aſſertion of the Apoſtle, that *we muſt through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Laſtly, There is one thing further to be obſerved upon theſe Expreſſions of our Saviour: And That is, that what in St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel is ſet down in theſe Words, (*Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate; — Becauſe ſtrait is the gate — that leadeth unto Life, and Few there be that find it,*) is in St. *Luke*'s Goſpel otherwiſe expreſſed thus; *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; For many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able*, St. *Luk.* xiii. 24. And why ſhall they *not be able*? The reaſon follows in the next Words, *When once the Maſter of the houſe is riſen up and has ſhut to the door, and ye begin to ſtand without and knock, — he ſhall anſwer and ſay unto you, I know you not whence you are, — depart from me All ye workers of Iniquity.* From whence it appears, that the Difficulty of Entring, is not ſo much the Appointment of *God*, as the Negligence and Delay of *Men*: They *ſeek* to enter, and they are not able; becauſe they *ſeek* negligently, they ſeek *too late*, they *ſeek* when the Door is ſhut. And ſo This Paſſage becomes parallel to thoſe other Texts of Scripture, St. *Matt.* xxv. 10; After the Bridegroom was come and the door ſhut, *came the fooliſh Virgins, ſaying, Lord open to us; But he anſwered and ſaid to them, I know you not.* Again: St. *John* vii. 34, *Ye ſhall* ſeek *me, and ſhall not find me.* The reaſon is expreſſed, ch. viii. 21, *Ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall die in your Sins*; therefore, *whither I go, ye cannot come.* Prov. i. 28, *Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me —, but they ſhall not find me; For that they hated Knowledge, and did not chuſe the Fear of the Lord.* Pſ. xviii. 41, *They cried, but there was none to ſave them; even unto the Lord, but he anſwered them not.* Iſ. i. 15. *When ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many Prayers, I will not hear*; For *your hands are full of Blood.* Jer. xiv. 12, 10, *When they faſt, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an Oblation, I will not accept them*; For *they have loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them.* Hoſ. v. 6, *They ſhall go — to* ſeek *the Lord, but they ſhall not find him, he hath withdrawn himſelf from them*; For *they have dealt treacherouſly againſt the Lord.* Mic. iii. 4. *Then ſhall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them; he will even hide his Face from them at that Time, as They have behaved themſelves ill in their doings.* St. *Jam.* iv: 3, *Ye ask and receive not, becauſe ye ask amiſs.* And, to mention but *one* paſſage more; *Rom.* ix. 31, *Iſrael which* followed *after the law of righteouſneſs, hath not attained to the Law of Righteouſneſs: Wherefore? Becauſe they Sought it not by Faith*; that is, by *That* way which God had thought fit to appoint. From theſe and numberleſs other paſſages in Scripture it appears, that the Rejection of men, is not from God, but of themſelves; and that the Difficulties in the way of their Salvation, are not ſo much the Appointment of God, as the Effects of their own Negligence and Delay: Excepting only in the Caſe of great Perſecution; And *there* God has promiſed a proportionably great Aſſiſtance, which will, together with the Temptation, alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it. Whether therefore the Number of thoſe who ſhall be ſaved, be in proportion Many or Few, makes no Alteration in the Concern of *any One* particular perſon; And therefore *Every One* ought to endeavour, by following the plain Rules that are ſet before him, to make his *own* Calling and Election ſure, and to work out his *own* Salvation with Fear and Trembling, without inquiring too curiouſly

SERM. LXIII.

riouſly into the Affairs of *Others*, wherein God the great Judge of All will at the general Day of Account take care abundantly to juſtify his own Proceedings, much better than we are now able to conceive or apprehend. For ſo our Saviour, when One put that Queſtion to him, *Lord, are there Few that be ſaved*; inſtead of making him a direct reply to the Queſtion propoſed, anſwered him with This more pertinent Exhortation, St. *Luk.* xiii. 24, *Strive* Ye *to enter in at the ſtrait Gate.*

Upon the whole; The Paſſages in Scripture, which ſeem to repreſent to us as if *Few* only ſhould be ſaved, are on the one hand ſuch, as ought by no means to be any occaſion of Deſpair or Diffidence to melancholy pious Perſons; becauſe the reaſon why ſo great Numbers periſh, is always in thoſe very Texts expreſly aſcribed to the Wickedneſs and Careleſsneſs of *Men*, not to any Appointment of *God*: And yet on the other hand *the* ſame Texts are, by the Wiſdom of the Spirit of God, expreſſed in ſuch a manner, as to excite the careleſs, and thoſe who are apt to be too negligent and remiſs; by giving them to underſtand, that except their Righteouſneſs exceeds the Righteouſneſs of the careleſs and worldly Multitude, they ſhall in no caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

And this may ſuffice concerning the 1*ſt* Particular; *viz.* the *Number* or *Proportion* of thoſe who ſhall inherit Salvation: *Thou haſt a Few names even in Sardis.* I ſhould now have proceeded to the 2*d* Head, namely, the *Qualification* by which they are intitled to that Inheritance: *Which have not defiled their Garments.* But This muſt be deferred to another Opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON LXIV.

The Qualification of thoſe that ſhall be ſaved.

REV. iii. 4.

Thou haſt a few Names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their Garments; and they ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

SERM. LXIV.

IN theſe later and corrupter Ages of Chriſtianity, wherein Prophaneneſs and Impiety have not only *from without* aſſaulted and indeavoured to deſtroy Religion, but alſo *crept in* and even *openly appeared* within all Parts of the Church of God; and when among thoſe who are not without ſome Degrees even of *ſincere* Deſire to become truly Religious, yet Speculations entring in the Room of Practice, and vain Contentions prevailing about Human Opinions, inſtead of Diligence to obey the plain Commandments of God, have almoſt eaten out the very Heart and Life of Religion, which conſiſts in Piety and Righteouſneſs, in Juſtice and univerſal Charity, in Sobriety and Temperance, and the Practice of all Virtue and Holineſs: During this Degenerate State, I ſay, of the Chriſtian World, in theſe later and corrupter Ages of the Church; there is nothing more likely to be of Effect in reviving the true Spirit of Chriſtianity, and reſtoring in the

SERM. LXIV.

the Minds of well-diſpoſed Perſons right and worthy Notions of Religion; than putting them upon conſidering, what Chriſtian Religion was in the primitive and pureſt Times, when Chriſtians were of One Heart and One Mind, ſerving God with Simplicity and Sincerity of Devotion, loving one another with perfect Charity and an undivided Affection, and keeping themſelves pure and unſpotted from the World. This latter Character of the Church of Chriſt, its Purity and Holineſs; and the Neceſſity of all its true Members anſwering that Character; is no where more affectionately deſcribed, than in the Epiſtles to the ſeven Churches of *Aſia*, ſet down in This and the foregoing Chapter. Wherein the excellent Character that is given to moſt of them by our Saviour himſelf, and yet the Reproof added at the Concluſion of that Character; will give us juſt Occaſion to conſider, what ſeverer Admonitions and Exhortations to Repentance *we* ſtand in need of, who have not *Their* Excellent Qualifications to extenuate our Defects. To *One* of theſe Churches, our Saviour gives this Character, *ch.* ii. 2. *I know thy Works, and thy labour and thy Patience, and how thou canſt not bear them which are evil;——And haſt born and haſt patience, and for my Name's ſake haſt laboured, and haſt not fainted.* And yet even of *This* Church he adds, *Nevertheleſs I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love.* To a *Second* he declares, ver. 9. *I know thy works and Tribulation and Poverty, but thou art rich:——Fear none of the things which thou ſhalt ſuffer.* To a *Third*, ver. 13. *I know thy Works,—and* that *thou holdeſt faſt my Name, and haſt not denied my* Faith. And yet even of *This* he adds, *But I have a Few things againſt Thee.* To a *Fourth*, ver. 19. *I know thy Works, and Charity, and Service, and Faith, and thy Patience and thy Works, and the laſt to be more than the firſt.* And yet of *This* alſo he adds; *Notwithſtanding, I have a few things againſt Thee.* Of a *Fifth*, he gives the following character, *ch.* iii. 8. *I know thy Works; Behold, I have ſet before thee an open door, and no man can ſhut it:——Becauſe thou haſt kept the Word of my Patience, I alſo will keep thee from the hour of Temptation, which ſhall come upon all the World, to try them that dwell upon the Earth.* No Man, that has a true Senſe of Religion upon his Mind, can read theſe Characters, without conſidering immediately within himſelf, *How* are they *Now* applicable to the Chriſtian World? And in what Proportion do we *Now* imitate the Piety and Holineſs of thoſe Primitive Churches? And if ſome even of *theſe* were charged with falling in ſome meaſure from their firſt Love; and commanded to conſider and remember from whence they were fallen, and repent; what Reflexions ought this to excite in *our* Minds, when we compare the Failings of ſuch bright Examples of Piety, with the open Prophaneneſs and Debauchery, with the irreligion and wickedneſs of later Ages? The *Two* remaining Churches of the *Seven* are repreſented as falling extremely ſhort of the Character of the other *Five*. Concerning *One* of them our Saviour declares, ver. 1*ſt*, of this iii*d* chapter, *I know thy Works, that thou haſt a Name that thou liveſt and art Dead; Be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.* To the *other* he ſays, *ver.* 15, *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot*, i. e. art growing careleſs and indifferent in the great Works of Piety and Righteouſneſs; *Thou ſayeſt, I am rich and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked;* i. e. very defective in the weightier matters of Religion, in Works of Goodneſs, Charity, and true Holineſs. And yet even of *Thoſe* our Saviour in the very ſame place ſo expreſſes himſelf, as of Churches not wholly caſt off, or under his entire and final Diſpleaſure: *As many as I love, I rebuke and chaſten; Be zealous therefore, and repent*, ver. 19. If ſome of thoſe *Primitive* Churches, for whom our Saviour declares ſo great a Concern and Love, were worthy of ſuch ſevere Reproofs for the decay of their Piety even in thoſe Purer Times; what concern muſt it needs raiſe in the Breaſt of every ſincere Chriſtian, to conſider how much greater Corruption of Manners, how much more open Prophaneneſs and Impiety, how much more uncharitableneſs and unreaſonable Animoſities, how much more general Unrighteouſneſs and Iniquity of all Kinds, has in theſe later Ages overſpread the Face of the Chriſtian World? What ſeverer Reproofs *We* have too juſt reaſon to fear from the Hands of God; and how much *more* remarkable a Repentance and more *univerſal* a Reformation of Manners, 'tis in-

incumbent upon *Us* to ſet about; leaſt *when the Son of Man cometh*, there remain not ſo much as Room for that Queſtion, *ſhall he find Faith upon the Earth?* The Things which were threatned to ſome of the Primitive Churches, that our Lord would remove their Candleſtick out of its place, and that he would *ſpue* them out of his Mouth; and which, upon their further Decay in Virtue actually came upon them; befel *them*, not only upon *their own* Account, but for *Examples* alſo to Others; and they are written for *Our* Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come. SERM. LXIV.

The Words of the Text, are taken out of our Saviour's Admonition to the former of thoſe two Churches, which fell under his more particularly ſevere Reproof; and they may ſerve for a perpetual direction in *all* Ages, to ſuch Perſons as, in the midſt of a degenerate and contentious World, are deſirous to underſtand and practiſe that Religion, which at its firſt inſtitution was ſo deſervedly eminent, for Amending Men's Manners and Reforming their Lives. *Thou haſt a few Names even in Sardis, that have not defiled their Garments; and they ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

Which Words, I in a former Diſcourſe obſerved to contain in them the four following particulars. 1*ſt*, An intimation of the *Number* or Proportion of thoſe, who ſhall inherit Salvation; *Thou haſt a Few Names even in Sardis.* 2dly, The *Qualification* by which they are intituled to that inheritance: *Which have not defiled their Garments.* 3dly, The *Nature* or Deſcription of the Reward promiſed them; *They ſhall walk with me in White.* And 4thly, The *Character* or Encomium given the perſons, who ſhall obtain this Inheritance, *For they are Worthy.* The 1*ſt* of Theſe, we have already conſidered, namely The *Number* or Proportion of thoſe, who ſhall inherit Salvation; *Thou haſt a Few names even in Sardis.* Without repeating therefore what has been before ſaid upon That Head, proceed we now in the 2*d*. place to conſider the *Qualification* mentioned in the Text, by which thoſe who ſhall be ſaved, are repreſented as being prepared or intitled to a Share in that glorious Inheritance. And This is, their having *not defiled their Garments.* Could a Man for the preſent lay aſide the Scripture, and, forbearing to look into the Characters There given of true Chriſtians, view the preſent Face of the Chriſtian World, and judge from thence what the Deſign and Nature of our Religion was, he could not but be tempted to imagine, that Chriſtianity was rather a contentious and uncharitable Art of diſputing about needleſs Ceremonies, and unintelligible Opinions, than a Rule of Life and Practice, an Obligation to Virtue, Holineſs, and univerſal Charity. But in the Scripture itſelf, the great Streſs of Religion, is always laid upon the Influence it has upon Men's Manners; And the higheſt Character of a true Diſciple of Chriſt, is That given in the Text, that he *has not defiled his Garments.* The Expreſſion is figurative, but yet of a very Obvious Signification; And by conſidering on the contrary what the Scripture calls *Defilement*, we may moſt eaſily and fully underſtand what it is *not to be defiled.* St. *Mat.* xv. 18. Not that which entreth *into* the Mouth, ſays our Saviour, but thoſe things which proceed *out* of the Mouth, and come forth from the Heart, *theſe defile* the man; *For out of the Heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies; Theſe are the things which defile a man, But to eat with unwaſhen hands, defileth not a man.* The ſame may be ſaid of all *other* external Denominations whatſoever: No difference of Meats; No variety of outward Rites, Forms or Ceremonies; No ſimple Errors of the Underſtanding, in ſuch matters of Opinion as affect not Moral Practice: But whatſoever *worketh Abomination or maketh a Lie*; Whatſoever corrupteth the *Heart* of Man, and is inconſiſtent with ſincere and virtuous Intention; Whatever is contrary to the Practical Law of God, and deſtructive of Charity and Goodwill among Men; *That* is it, which in the religious Senſe of the Word, *defileth the Man.* And to abſtain from all Appearance of ſuch Evils, in the midſt of a degenerate and corrupt World; *This is pure Religion and undefiled before God; This* is *keeping* a man's *ſelf unſpotted from the World*; This is, *having not defiled his Garments.* Originally, and in the ſtrict and moſt proper ſignification of the Phraſe, it denotes an entire Freedom from Sin: But in That Senſe, the Character would belong, not to a *Few Names*, as is affirmed in the Text; but abſolutely to *None* at all. For *how ſhould man be juſt before God?* Job ix. 2. *What is man, that he ſhould be clean?*

SERM. LXIV.

ch. xv, ver. 14 ch. iv. ver. 18.

and he that is born of a woman, that he ſhould be righteous? Behold, he putteth no truſt in his Saints; yea the heavens are not clean in his Sight: or as the ſame thing is expreſſed in another paſſage of the ſame Book; *Behold he put no Truſt in his Servants, and his Angels he charged with Folly.* Again: *ch.* xxv. 4. *How then can man be juſtified with God? or how can he be clean, that is born of a Woman? Behold, even to the moon, and it ſhineth not, yea, the ſtars are not pure in his Sight; how much leſs Man that is a Worm, and the Son of Man that is a Worm?* The Scripture is full of declarations of This Kind. *Prov.* xx. 9. *Who can ſay, I have made my Heart clean? I am pure from my Sin?* Pſ. cxxx. 3. *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt be extreme to mark iniquity; O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?* And ſtill more directly, Pſ. cxliii. 2. *Enter not into judgment with thy Servant, for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified.* The Wiſe man, even yet more expreſsly, Eccleſ. vii. 20. *There is not a juſt man upon Earth, that doeth good and ſinneth not.* Accordingly *Job*, that moſt righteous perſon, whoſe Character God himſelf joyns with that of *Noah* and *Daniel*, as the moſt irreproveable of all mortal men; yet even *he* confeſſes of himſelf, *Job* ix. 20. *If I juſtify myſelf, my own Mouth ſhall condemn me; if I ſay I am perfect, it ſhall alſo prove me perverſe.* And the manner of ſpeaking of the Apoſtles in the New Teſtament, is the very ſame: *In many things we offend all, St.* Jam. iii. 2. And *if we ſay, we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us,* 1 Joh. i. 8. 'Tis evident therefore, that by this phraſe in the Text, having *not defiled their Garments*, is not, cannot be meant, ſtrictly and abſolutely, being *without Sin.* No, This is the peculiar Character of our Saviour alone, and cannot be truly affirmed of any other Perſon, that ever dwelt upon the Face of the Earth. Another ſignification therefore of this Phraſe may naturally be ſuggeſted to us by the uſe of a like expreſſion in the ſame Book; *Rev.* vii. 14. *Theſe are they who ——have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.* Here, having *waſhed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb*, is uſed as an equivalent expreſſion to that of *having* never *defiled them*; ſignifying, that under the gracious Covenant of the Goſpel, Thoſe who by Baptiſm have waſhed away their Sins, and return not to them any more, are thro' Chriſt reputed in the Sight of God, as having never committed them. And becauſe, by Baptiſm, in Scripture is always meant, *not the waſhing away the filth of the Fleſh, (not the bare Form or external Ceremony,) but the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*; therefore thoſe who have *broken off their Sins by Repentance*, and *their Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor*, (which bears the beſt Analogy *to*, and is ſignified *by* the Baptiſm of riper years;) ſuch perſons (I ſay) are in Scripture ſpoken of, as being (in the Goſpel-Senſe) perfectly juſt and righteous. *Noah was a juſt man, and* perfect *in his generation, and Noah walked with God*, Gen. vi. 9. *Zacharias and Elizabeth* were *righteous before God, walking in* all *the commandments and Ordinances of the Lord* blameleſs, *St.* Luk. i. 6. All *Chriſtians* in general are exhorted to be, *diligent, that* they *may be found of* our Lord *in peace*, without ſpot and blameleſs, 2 Pet. iii. 14: that they may be blameleſs *in the day of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 Cor. i. 8. that their *hearts* may be *ſtabliſhed* unblameable *in Holineſs, before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt with all his Saints*, 1 Th. iii. 13: *that their whole Spirit and Soul and Body* may *be preſerved* blameleſs *unto the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Th. v. 23. *that they may be preſented* faultleſs *before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding joy*, Jude 24. And accordingly in the deſcription of them in their heavenly State, 'tis ſaid that *in their Mouth was found no guile, for they are without Fault before the Throne of* God, *Rev.* xiv. 5. The Conſiſtency of theſe high Encomiums with the declarations in the paſſages before-cited, concerning the Impoſſibility of any man's being juſtified before God; The manner (I ſay) how theſe two different kinds of Expreſſion are to be reconciled, is moſt clearly and diſtinctly ſet forth by St. *Paul*, Col. i. 21; *You that were ſometime alienated, and Enemies in your Mind by wicked Works, yet Now hath he reconciled, In the Body of his Fleſh thro' Death, to preſent you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his Sight*; and Eph. i. 4, 6, *That we ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love; —— to the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved; In whom we have Redemption thro' his blood, even the* Forgiveneſs of Sins. Theſe and the like Expreſſions of the Apoſtle do with ſufficient clearneſs explain to us, both how it is *poſſible* on the one

one hand, in the gracious and merciful Senſe of the Goſpel, for frail and ſinful Men to attain unto this Character, that they *have not defiled their garments*; and at the ſame time how abſolutely *neceſſary* it is likewiſe on the other hand, notwithſtanding all the Favour and Indulgence of the Goſpel, that they ſhould preſerve themſelves *ſo undefiled*.

3*dly*, The *Third* particular, obſervable in the Text, is the *Nature* or *Deſcription* of the *Reward* promiſed to them that *defile not their Garments*; *They ſhall walk with me in White*. And here 'tis obvious to obſerve, how in the nature of the *Thing itſelf*, as well as by the *Decree and Appointment of God*, the *Reward* promiſed to good men in Scripture is agreeable to the nature of the *Qualification*, to which that *Reward* is annexed. To them that keep their *Garments undefiled*, 'tis promiſed that they ſhall *walk with Chriſt in White*: To them *that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs*, that *they ſhall be filled* and clothed with *Righteouſneſs*. To them that take delight in ſerving God *here*; that *hereafter* alſo they *ſhall be before* his *Throne, and ſhall ſerve him day and night in his Temple*. Whether a wicked Perſon, if admitted into Heaven, could not poſſibly be made happy there, (as ſome have preſumed to affirm,) is but a vain and needleſs Queſtion. That which is certain, and all that concerns *us* to know, is; that whatſoever *defileth*, whatſoever *worketh* any *abomination* or unrighteouſneſs, *ſhall in no wiſe* be permitted to *enter therein*. And 'tis a powerful recommendation of the neceſſity of a religious Life, and worthy the moſt ſerious conſideration of careleſs Sinners; that Virtue is, not only, by the Appointment of God, the Way to Happineſs; but itſelf alſo, in the nature of Things, an eſſential part of it. And that, as God is Himſelf of eſſential Holineſs, and *cannot behold iniquity*; ſo he has made the Happineſs of Heaven to conſiſt, not indeed in *That only*, (for, the *Whole* of thoſe *things*, *which God has prepared for them that love him, neither has eye ſeen, nor ear heard, neither has it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive*;) but in *great meaſure* he has made it to conſiſt in the Perfection of *Virtue*, or at leaſt to be in neceſſary Conjunction with it. There is nothing more earneſtly and more conſtantly inculcated in Scripture than this Notion, that Righteouſneſs *here*, is *therefore* neceſſary to Happineſs *hereafter*; becauſe a great Part even of that *Happineſs* itſelf, is to be made up of the Perfection of *Righteouſneſs*. One principal Particular of the great Promiſes made in the *Old Teſtament* to the Jews after their final Reſtoration; which, if it does not directly ſignify, yet is at leaſt a Type of the Heavenly ſtate; is, that their *people* ſhould *be* All *righteous*, Iſ. lx. 21; that they ſhould delight to *come to worſhip before the Lord* Perpetually, *ch.* lxvi. 23; and ſhould *not do iniquity, nor ſpeak lies, neither* ſhould *a deceitful Tongue be found in their Mouth*, Zeph. iii. 13. And in the *New Teſtament* the future Happineſs of the Church of Chriſt, is deſcribed after the ſame manner; that it ſhall be *a glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing, but holy and without blemiſh*, Eph. v. 27; and that *we, according to his Promiſe, look for new heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs*, 2 Pet. iii. 13. Now This Righteouſneſs, is figuratively repreſented in the Text, and in other places of Scripture, by *White Garments*. The Purity and Holineſs of *God* himſelf, is expreſſed *Pſ.* civ. 2. by his being *covered with Light as with a garment*; and by his *garment* being *white as the Snow*, Dan. vii. 9. And *That* of our *Saviour*; by his appearing at his *Transfiguration*, in *a raiment* as *white as the Light*; even *ſhining, exceeding white as Snow, ſo as no Fuller on Earth could white them*, St. *Mar.* ix. 3; and, after his *Reſurrection*, in the ſame Habit, *Matt.* xxviii. 3; and again, after his *Aſcenſion*, Rev. i. 14. In purſuance therefore of the ſame Figure, the *Saints in Heaven* are in the Text deſcribed as *walking in white*: The Church in the Prophecy, *Pſ.* xliv. 13; is repreſented as *all glorious within*, and that *her clothing is of wrought Gold*. *He that overcometh*, ſaith our Saviour, *the ſame ſhall be clothed in white raiment*, Rev. iii. 5. The *four and twenty* Elders, ſitting about the Throne, were clothed in *white raiment*, ch. iv. 4: To them that were *ſlain for the Word of God*, were *given white robes*, ch. vi. 11. The great multitude that no man could number, that were redeemed from the Earth out of all Nations, were *clothed with white robes*, and palms in their hands, *ch.* vii. 9. *The Armies in heaven were clothed in fine linnen, white and clean*, ch. xix. 14; And the

Mat. xvii. 2.

SERM. LXIV.

the *literal* meaning of all these expressions is unfolded, *ver.* 8; that, at the *marriage of the Lamb, to Her* (*viz.* to the Church,) *was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linnen, clean and white; for the fine linnen is the righteousness of the Saints.* And This explains to us the Parable of the Man who was cast out into utter Darkness, because he had not on a *Wedding-garment*, St. Matt. xxii. 11. *i. e.* was not clothed with Works of Righteousness; and illustrates those Admonitions of our Saviour, *Rev.* iii. 18, *I counsel thee to buy of me —— white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the Shame of thy nakedness do not appear*: and ch. xvi. 15. *Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his Shame.* The Sum of all is, that into Heaven shall be admitted no Impurity, no Wickedness, *nothing that defileth.* Wherefore *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to enter in; —— For without are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers, and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a Lie.*

Rev. xxii. 14, 15.

4*thly*, and *Lastly*; The Text concludes with a *Character* or *Encomium* given of those persons, who were to walk in white with our Saviour: *For they are* Worthy. The Church of *Rome* has, upon those Words, founded the Doctrine of *Merit*; and Others, through Fear of falling into that Error, have run into the contrary extreme, and decried All necessity of Virtue and *Good Works*. The Truth in This, as in most other cases, lies plainly between the two extremes. Our best Virtues or Works are so imperfect, as to need *Pardon* rather than deserve a *Reward*; and if they were never so perfect, we should still be *but unprofitable* Servants, having done only what was our Duty to do. Yet thro' the Intercession of Christ, God is pleased to accept them, as if they were really meritorious; and by the gracious *Promise* of God, we have as just a claim to the Reward, as if it had been originally due to us of proper *Right*. Our improvement in Virtue, is the *Ground of Proportion*, tho' not the *Meritorious cause* of the Reward. So that tho' the Happiness of Heaven, be given us, not indeed *for* our Works; yet it will be in *proportion to* them; and tho' not *upon account* of our Virtue, yet exactly *according to* our improvement therein. The best of Men are so far from being able (properly and strictly speaking) to *merit* any thing for themselves and others, (which is the *Romish* Doctrine of Merit;) that on the contrary even the Patriarch *Jacob* declared himself *not Worthy of the least of God's mercies*, Gen. xxxii. 10. And St. *Paul*, concerning Himself, that tho' he was not *conscious* of any thing against himself, *yet* was he *not thereby justified*, 1 Cor. iv. 4. And, of all Christians in general, that *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his Mercy he saved us.* Tit. iii. 5. that *he has saved us, not according to our Works, but according to —— his grace —— given us in Jesus Christ*, 2 Tim. i. 9. that our Salvation *is the Gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast*, Eph. ii. 9. *That by the deeds of the Law there shall no Flesh be justified in his Sight*, Rom. iii. 20. that *Abraham* himself *had whereof to glory, but not before God*, Rom. iv. 2. that even in those things we actually do, we have no sufficiency *of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. that *it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. and that 'tis he that makes us *perfect in every good work to do his Will—thro' Jesus Christ*, Heb. xiii. 21. The meaning of all these Passages is, that the Offer of the Happiness of Heaven to us at all, is the free and undeserved Gift of God in Christ; and that the Ability of performing the conditions necessary to the obtaining even that Free Gift, is continually the Effect of the Divine Assistance; and that therefore (properly speaking,) the very best of our Works have no Merit in them. Even in the *Old Testament* where the Scripture affirms *it shall be our* Righteousness, *if we observe to do all the Commandments*, Deut. vi. 25; 'tis observable that the Word which we render *Righteousness*, is by the *Seventy* translated ἐλεημοσύνη *our Way of obtaining* Mercy only. And they who would make More of it, are severely reproved, *Prov.* xxx. 12. *There is a generation that are pure in their own Eyes, and yet is not washed from their Filthiness.* Which Censure is strongly confirmed by our Saviour's declaration, that the *Publican* in the Parable *went down to his House justified, rather than* the *Pharisee* who was *righteous in* his *own eyes.* These are sufficient Evidences, that our Works (in Strictness of Speech) have *no Merit.* Yet on the other side,

Rom. vi. *ult.*

taking

taking the Expreſſion in its right Senſe, (which will beſt be done by comparing it with thoſe already mentioned;) and underſtanding it according to the gracious Tenor of the Goſpel, it *may* be Truly ſaid of virtuous and good men, becauſe the Scripture frequently ſays it, that *they* are *Worthy*. Not properly and ſtrictly, but according to God's gracious Acceptation and Promiſe in the Goſpel. They to whom God has promiſed, upon an eaſy condition, a very great and diſproportionate Reward, may Truly be ſaid, though not by the Merit of the Work itſelf, yet by virtue of the Promiſe when they *have performed* That condition, to have *deſerved* the Reward. Our Saviour himſelf expreſſes himſelf in This manner, not only in the Text, but alſo in other places of Scripture; St. *Luk.* xx, 35. *They*, ſaith he, *that ſhall be accounted* Worthy, *to obtain That World*. And St. Mat. x. 37. *He that loveth Father or Mother more than Me, is not* Worthy *of me*; implying, that he who did the contrary, might be ſaid to be *worthy* of him. And accordingly the Apoſtle exhorts, *Col.* i. 10. to *walk* Worthy *of the Lord*; and 1 *Th.* ii. 12. to *walk* worthy *of* God *who has called* us, *unto his Kingdom and Glory*. St. *Peter* declares, that *if a man, for conſcience towards God, endure grief, ſuffering wrongfully, this is* Thank-worthy, 1 *Pet.* ii. 19. and St. *Paul* affirms of the Saints who ſuffered of old, that they were ſuch perſons, *of whom the World was not worthy*, Heb. xi. 38. And he calls God's *Performance* of his own *free Promiſes* given in the Law and in the Prophets, the Righteouſneſs *of God which is by Faith of Jeſus Chriſt, unto All, and upon All them that believe*, Rom. iii. 22; and again *ver.* 25.—*his* righteouſneſs *for the remiſſion of Sins that are paſt*, and argues, *Heb.* vi. 10. that *God is not* unrighteous, *to forget our Work and labour of love*: And concerning *himſelf* in particular, he profeſſes his firm aſſurance, that *henceforth there* was *laid up for him a crown of* Righteouſneſs, *which God the* Righteous *Judge* ſhould *give him at that Day*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. and Rev. xxii. 14. *Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city*. Such as allow themſelves to pick ſingle Texts of Scripture without comparing them with the whole and with each other; may from theſe places collect the *Romiſh* Doctrine of *Merit*; or from thoſe before-cited may draw juſt the *contrary* Doctrine, of the *Uſefulneſs of good Works*: But they who compare the ſeveral paſſages, and conſider them Together; will eaſily ſee the meaning, and the conſiſtency of them all; and particularly what it is that our Saviour intends in the Text, when he declares concerning thoſe who keep their *garments undefiled*, that they *ſhall walk with* him *in white, for they are* Worthy.

SERM. LXIV.

SERMON LXV.

That the Terms of Salvation are offered to all Men.

REV. ii. 29.

He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.

SERM. LXV.

THESE words are ſo *frequently* and ſo *emphatically* repeated by our Saviour, at the End of *ſeveral* of his Diſcourſes in the *Goſpel*, and again as the general Concluſion of each of theſe *Epiſtles* to the Seven Churches of *Aſia*; that no one can doubt but they contain ſomething in them, of very weighty and ſignificant importance. In the xi*th* chapter of St. *Matthew*, ver. 15. after his explication of the Nature of *John Baptiſt*'s Office, he adds, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* And in the xiii*th* chapter of the ſame Goſpel, at the end of his Parable of the *Sower*, *ver.* 9; and at the end of his explication of the Parable of the *Tares* of the Field, ver. 43; (Both which Parables, are moſt full and emphatical Deſcriptions of the whole State and Nature of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation,) he again concludes with repeating the ſame Words, *Who hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* In the ii*d* and iii*d* chapters of

SERM. LXV.

of the *Revelation*, are contained *ſeven* Epiſtles to the *ſeven* Churches of *Aſia*; full of very earneſt and preſſing Exhortations to Repentance and Amendment of life, and moſt lively and affectionate Deſcriptions of the True Nature of Chriſt's religion: And at the concluſion of *every One* of theſe Epiſtles, are diſtinctly and at length repeated, no leſs than *ſeven* ſeveral times, the words of the Text; *He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* And in chapter the xiii*th*, of the ſame Book; after having given a large Prophetick deſcription of Antichriſtian Power ſitting in the Seat and Temple of God, and making War with, (that is, perſecuting) the True Worſhippers of God, and having all Nations given into his hands, ſo that all the World ſhould worſhip him, whoſe Names are not written in the Book of *Life*; To ſhow that This is a Matter wherein All Sincere Chriſtians are more or leſs concerned, to take heed to themſelves that they be not impoſed upon by Deluſions of worldly Power and Ambition, and by empty Shows in matters of Religion; he *ſtill again* repeats the ſame exclamation, ver. 9, *If any Man have an Ear, let him hear.*

The words are a ſtrong and general Appeal, to the Reaſon and Underſtanding of all unprejudiced and impartial Men. And they are highly expreſſive, of the *Authority and Goodneſs* of *God* who *ſpeaks* of the *Reaſonableneſs, Truth and Excellency* of the *Things that are ſpoken*; and of the *Capacity* men have, and the *Obligation* they are under, to hearken to, and obey what God thus delivers to them.

The Phraſe, Let *him hear*, is an *Authoritative* expreſſion, becoming the Majeſty of God, and the Weight and Dignity of what is ſpoken by his Command. It denotes, that All the Commands of God, are given men, not for his *own* Sake or Benefit, but for *Theirs:* Being founded in the nature and reaſon of Things, and eſſentially conducive both to mens preſent and future Happineſs. And if they *refuſe*, or *neglect*, to *Hear*; if they be *careleſs and negligent* to *underſtand* the word of God, and will be at No Pains to *examine* into the *True* Nature and End of *Religion*; 'tis *No Hurt* to *Him*, but to *Themſelves* only. When therefore *He* has done all that was reaſonable for him to do, and has given them plain and frequent Warnings, and admoniſhed them of the Uſefulneſs and Neceſſity of Virtue, and yet *They* continue *deaf* to his inſtructions; he proceeds *no* further, he uſes *no* Compulſion, he draws them *only with the Cords of a Man*, and will apply to them no otherwiſe than as to *moral Agents.* Thus the Prophets in the *Old Teſtament:* Ezek. iii. 27. *Thus ſaith the Lord God, He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear; for they are a rebellious houſe.* And Thus the Great Prophet of the *New Teſtament*, Rev. xxii. 11. *He that is unjuſt*, (after the repeated Admonitions and Invitations to Repentance given him in the Goſpel,) *let him be unjuſt ſtill; and he that is Filthy, let him be Filthy ſtill.* Upon the ſame Ground, and after the ſame manner of ſpeaking, St. *Paul*, in 1 *Cor.* xiv. 38, *The Things*, ſays he, *that I write unto you, are the Commandments of the Lord; But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.* And the ſame Apoſtle, after having long preached in vain to the obſtinate and prejudiced *Jews*, Acts xiii. 46, *It was neceſſary*, ſays he, *that the word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to You; but ſeeing ye put it from you, and judge your ſelves unworthy of everlaſting Life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* Of the ſame nature and kind, though in the way of a *gentler* and more *tender* Reproof, are thoſe words of our Saviour to his Diſciples; when, after *two* admonitions, in a time of extreme danger, he found them the *Third* time ſleeping; *Sleep* on *Now*, ſays he, *and take your Reſt*, Matt. xxvi. 45. This therefore is the *Firſt* notion, which thoſe words in the Text, Let *him hear*, do obviouſly carry along with them; They are expreſſive of the *Authority* of God, and of the *Weight and Importance* of what is ſpoken by his Command.

But this is not All. For as they expreſs the *Authority* of God, in *requiring* men to *attend*; ſo they do further denote his *Goodneſs* likewiſe, in propoſing to men, univerſally and plainly, *the Doctrine and the Way of Life.* In *This* ſenſe, the words of our Lord in the Text, Let *him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches*; are well paraphraſed by *Solomon*, Prov. i. 20, *Wiſdom crieth without, ſhe uttereth her voice in the Streets; She crieth in the chief place of Concourſe, in the opening of the Gates,* ——

SERM. LXV.

Gates, —— *ſaying, How long ye ſimple ones, will ye love Simplicity!* —— *Turn you at my Reproof; Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*. And by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. vi. 16, 14. *She goeth about,* ſeeking *ſuch as are worthy of her; ſhe ſhoweth herſelf favourable unto them in the Ways, and meeteth them in every Thought; Whoſo ſeeketh her early, ſhall have no great Travel; for he ſhall find her ſitting at his doors.* St. *Paul* in a very emphatical and lofty figure of ſpeaking, carries this matter ſtill further, 2 *Cor.* v, 20; God, not only *propoſes* to us the Means of reconciliation, but *as tho' God did* Beſeech *you* (ſays he) *by us, we* pray *you* —, *be ye reconciled to God.* His manner of expreſſion in That *whole* Verſe, is extremely remarkable: *We are* (ſays he) *Ambaſſadors* for *Chriſt*; He does not ſay, We are the Ambaſſadors *of* Chriſt, (though That alſo *might* properly enough have been ſaid;) but we are, ſays he, Ambaſſadors *for* Chriſt. *Chriſt*, is the Great Ambaſſador of the Father; (*the Apoſtle and High-Prieſt of our Profeſſion, Chriſt Jeſus,* Heb. iii. 1.) And, in *His* abſence, *We* (ſays the Apoſtle) *are Ambaſſadors* for *him*, Ambaſſadors *in his ſtead*, Ambaſſadors *from God* to men, if we deliver his words faithfully; And therefore, *as though* God *did beſeech you by Us, We* (ſays he) *in Chriſt's ſtead*, (in the Abſence of Chriſt the Great Ambaſſador of the Covenant, *We in his ſtead*) *pray you, be ye reconciled to God.* This is the *Second* notion included in the words, Let *him hear*; They denote the *Goodneſs* of God, in *propoſing* to men, univerſally and plainly, *the Doctrine and the Way of Life.* Whoſoever hath *Ears*, let him *hear*; and whoſoever *heareth*, let him *obey*; and whoſoever obeyeth already, let him *perſevere* in ſo doing unto the End: *Rev.* xxii. 11, *He that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill; and he that is Holy, let him be Holy ſtill.*

The other phraſe in the Text, *He that hath an* Ear; ſignifies, he that hath *Underſtanding*, that hath *Ability*, that hath *Capacity* to apprehend what is ſpoken. Thus *Matt.* xix. 12. when our Saviour had given a Deſcription of Some Excellent ſons, who had choſen to abſtain from many even of the *Innocent* Enjoyments of Life, that they might have more Time and Opportunities to promote the Intereſt of Religion and Virtue, which is the Kingdom of God; he adds, *He that is* Able *to receive it, let him receive it.* And in like manner, ch. xi. 14, after having given a large Character of the Perſon and Office of *John the Baptiſt*; *And if ye will* receive *it*, ſays he, *This is Elias which was for to come: He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* To *have an* Ear therefore, ſignifies to have *Underſtanding* and *Apprehenſion.* By which, however, is meant, *not* mere *Natural* Parts and Abilities; (For the Goſpel is preached to the *Poor* and *Mean*, as well as to the *Learned*; Neither are Many of the *Wiſe* men of *This world*, called; Nor are *mere Natural Parts and Abilities* of *Any* conſideration in *Moral* and *Religious* Eſtimation;) But to *have an* Ear, in the Scripture-ſenſe, means, to have an *Underſtanding free* and *unprejudiced, open* to *attend* unto, and *apt* to *receive* the *Truth.* Which is a Qualification including *Probity* and Fairneſs of Mind, and is therefore highly *commendable* in the *moral* Senſe. *Matt.* xiii. 16, *Bleſſed are* your *Eyes, for they* ſee; *and your* Ears, *for they* hear. And the *Want* of it, is not, like the Want of *natural* Parts and Abilities, *pitiable* and compaſſionable; but *faulty*, and deſerving of ſevere *Reproof:* Mar. viii. 17, 18, *Perceive ye not* yet, ſays our Lord to his Diſciples by way of Expoſtulation; *perceive ye not* yet, ſays he, *neither underſtand? Have ye your Heart yet hardened? Having Eyes, ſee ye not? And having Ears, hear ye not, and do ye not remember?* From which *Rebuke* given by our Lord to his Diſciples, in ſo earneſt and affectionate a manner, for not making Uſe of their *Reaſon* and *Underſtanding*; we cannot fail to infer this *important Obſervation* in matters of Religion; that the *Taſte* or *Reliſh*, the *Judgment*, the *Underſtanding*, by which men are to diſcern and chuſe, and by which they are to form their Sentiments concerning the Truth or Error of any religious doctrines; muſt never be, any *Enthuſiaſtick Fancy*, any *ſtrong Imagination*, or *unaccountable impreſſion of Mind*, which is the *Spirit of Deluſion*; but it muſt always be, an *impartial Attention* to the *Right and Reaſon* of the Caſe, and to the *Nature* and *Evidence* of the Thing. This is in the Goſpel-ſenſe, having *Ears to hear*, and *Eyes* to *ſee* and *Underſtandings* wherewith to *Underſtand.* According to which *explication* of the words; This Phraſe ſo often uſed by our Saviour, *he that Ears to hear*, does plainly contain

a ve-

a very affectionate and ſtrong Appeal to the unprejudiced Senſe of Mankind, for the *Reaſonableneſs*, *Truth*, and *Excellency* of the *Things ſpoken*, or the *Doctrines delivered by him*. SERM. LXV.

And as *This* Challenge, *Whoſo hath an Ear*, contains thus a declaration of the Reaſonableneſs of the *Doctrine propoſed*; and the *other* part of the Words, let *him hear*, are expreſſive of the *Authority and Goodneſs* of *God* who ſpeaks: So *Both* of them together, plainly infer and ſet forth the *Capacity* men have, and the indiſpenſable Obligation they are under, to hearken to, and obey, what God delivers to them. *He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.*

The Words being thus explained, we may from hence in the enſuing Diſcourſe naturally deduce the *four* following Doctrinal Obſervations. 1*ſt*, That *God*, the Great Creator, and righteous Governour, and merciful Judge of the Whole Earth, offers to *All men* the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation: Let *him hear*, (let *every man* hear,) *what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* 2*dly*, That This Offer, though graciouſly made to *All*, yet in Event becomes *Effectual* to *Thoſe only*, who are *qualified* and *capable* to *receive* it: *He that hath an* Ear, *let him hear.* 3*dly*, That they who *want* an *Ear*; they who *want* the *Diſpoſitions neceſſary* to their receiving and embracing this gracious Offer of Salvation, or are prevented by any of the *Hindrances* which render it ineffectual, are always very ſeverely reproved in Scripture; plainly denoting it to be their *own Fault*, their own *Perverſeneſs* only, that they have not *Ears to hear.* 4*thly* and *Laſtly*, That hence conſequently All thoſe paſſages of Scripture, wherein *God* is at any time repreſented as *blinding* mens *Eyes*, or *cloſing* their *Ears*, or *hardning* their *Hearts*, or *taking away* their *Underſtanding* from them; muſt of neceſſity be underſtood to be *figurative* Expreſſions only; not denoting literally what God actually effects by his Power, but what by his Providence he juſtly and wiſely permits.

I. *Firſt*, God, the Great Creator, and righteous Governour, and merciful Judge of the Whole Earth, offers to *All men* the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation: Let *him hear*, (let *every man* hear,) *what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* God *ſpeaks* to men *Originally* by the *Light* of *Nature*, by the *Order* and *Proportions* of *Things*, by the *Voice* of *Reaſon*, by the *Dictates* of *Conſcience.* 'Tis *every* man's Duty, and 'tis in *every* man's Power, to *hearken* to this *Voice* of *Reaſon* and *Conſcience*; to this *Candle of the Lord*, as the Wiſe man ſtiles it, *Prov.* xx. 27. And concerning *Them* who *do* ſo St. *Paul* declares, that, *having not the Law*, (that is, having no *revealed* Law given them, yet) *they are a Law unto themſelves.* And *by that* Law, by the Law of *Reaſon*, of *Nature* and *Conſcience*, ſhall they finally be judged. For every man is accepted according to what he *Hath*, and not according to what he *Hath not.* This *Light of Reaſon*, is *univerſal*; the *Firſt*, and *Great* Gift of God; *implanted* in the Minds of *All* men; *acknowledged* by the *Conſcience*, even of the *Unrighteous* themſelves; atteſted to by the *neceſſary judgment and approbation* even of the moſt abandoned and *Corrupt*, in all Caſes wherein their *own particular Intereſt* is not concerned. The acting *contrary* to This Light, by any profane, unjuſt, fraudulent, or debauched Practices whatſoever, is in *All* perſons, under *All Diſpenſations*, the higheſt and moſt inexcuſable Fault; as being deſtructive of the very *Foundation* of *All* Religion. And the acting *agreeably* to it, is in *All* perſons *Always* acceptable to God; and, in Thoſe to whom no Light of Revelation hath been afforded, 'tis All *that is required* of them. For *in every Nation, he that feareth God and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted of him.* When, thro' the growing Corruptions and Idolatry of many Ages, Cuſtom and Example and bad Education had almoſt univerſally extinguiſhed the natural Light of Conſcience; and cauſed *Reaſon*, That Great Gift and Witneſs of God, to be almoſt totally neglected; God raiſed up the *Patriarchs*, both before and after the Flood, to be *Preachers of Righteouſneſs* to the World, to be as *Lights ſhining in a dark place*, to invite *All men* to *Repentance*, to the *Acknowledgment of the Truth* and to the *Practice of Virtue*, in their ſeveral and reſpective *Generations.* After which, by the giving of the *Law* to the *Iſraelites*, he placed That people as a *City on a Hill*, an eminent and ſtanding Witneſs to all the Nations around, calling them off from impious and abominable Idolatries to the Worſhip of the God of Heaven: *Iſ.* xlix. 22, *Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and ſet up my ſtandard to the people;*

SERM. LXV.

and they ſhall bring thy ſons in their arms, and thy daughters ſhall be carried upon their ſhoulders. And by a Succeſſion of *Prophets* for Many Ages, he declared continually to the whole People of the Jews, and by Them to All Others who were willing *to retain God in their Knowledge*, and had not wholly given themſelves up to a *reprobate Mind*; he declared his readineſs to accept That Repentance and Amendment of Sinners, which even the Light of Nature itſelf, if they had attended to it, would in a good degree have led them to; *God having never left himſelf wholly without Witneſs, in that he did good, and gave men rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling their hearts with food and gladneſs*; and their *own conſciences* in the mean time, according to their moral or immoral Behaviour, *accuſing or elſe excuſing one another*. God, I ſay, by a continual Succeſſion of *Prophets*, declared (what the Light of Nature itſelf gave reaſonable but obſcurer Hopes of,) his readineſs to accept the Repentance and Amendment of Sinners, and to receive *All men* to his Mercy, upon Their returning into the way of Righteouſneſs. *Ezek.* xxxiii. 11, *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the Death of the Wicked, but that he turn from his way and live.* And *Iſ.* lv. 1, 3, 6, 7, *Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the Waters: And he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without Money and without Price.* —— *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your Soul ſhall live; and I will make an everlaſting Covenant with you, even the ſure mercies of David.* —— *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* By the *Goſpel of his Son*, God has ſtill *more expreſly and explicitly* declared and commanded to be preached to *every Nation under Heaven*, the merciful Offer of Salvation made unto *All Mankind*, upon the moſt reaſonable and neceſſary Terms of Faith and Repentance, That is, of ſincere renewed Obedience; Excluding *None* from this gracious Invitation; but commanding his Servants to go out into All places, and to *exhort* men, to *beſeech* them, to *urge* them, to be *inſtant with* them, nay even to *compel* them, (by the moſt kind and earneſt Intreaties, by the moſt affectionate and preſſing Importunities, *compel them*) *to come in*, that his houſe may be filled. Accordingly, *their Sound* has *gone forth into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.* And no man, to whom this Doctrine has been preached, can ſay, that his Duty and the Way to Happineſs has not been clearly made known to him; unleſs he wilfully cloſes his *Eyes* that he may not ſee, and his *Ears* that he may not *hear*. Our Saviour *himſelf*, who was in the *Boſom* of his *Father*, (and who knew perfectly, and was ſent by him on purpoſe to reveal to us his Whole Will concerning the Salvation of Mankind;) thus teſtifies in the moſt expreſs words: *God* (ſays he) *ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that* whoſoever *believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life*; and *that the* World *through him might be ſaved*, Joh. iii. 16, 17: He does not ſay, he was ſent *that a few particular perſons*, but *that the* World, if they would hearken to him, and be prevailed upon to return into the ways of Righteouſneſs, *thro' him might be ſaved.* And accordingly when he ſet about this great Work for which he was ſent; he applies himſelf to *All men* without reſerve; *Matt.* xi. 28, *Come unto me* All *ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt*: And *Joh.* vii. 37, *If* any *man thirſt, let him come unto Me, and drink.*

Joh. xvii. 9. Luk. iv. 23—27. Mat. xv. 24.

In *one* place indeed, we find him affirming, that *he was not ſent, ſave unto the loſt Sheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* But the occaſion, and manner, of his affirming this; and his Treatment of the perſon afterwards, to whom he had ſaid this; and the whole Hiſtory and Tenour of Scripture, plainly ſhow, that his Meaning herein was not to affirm, that he was not ſent to Others *at all*; but only that, in order of *Time*, he was not ſent to Others ſo *ſoon*, as to *the loſt ſheep of the Houſe of Iſrael.* The Goſpel was to be preached *firſt* to the Jews; and our Lord was *firſt* to be the *Glory of God's people Iſrael*: But *afterwards* he was to be alſo a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*, and to be their *Salvation unto the Ends of the Earth.* The *Apoſtles themſelves*, at the Beginning, were under very ſtrong Prejudices concerning this Matter: But they were convinced afterwards by frequent Admonitions from our Lord; And then they Fully and Clearly teſtified this Great Truth. *The Grace of God*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to* All *men*, Tit. ii. 11: And 1 *Tim.* ii. 4, *Who will have* All *men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge*

ledge of the Truth. St. *Peter* in like manner, in his *Second Epiſtle*, ch. iii. 9. The Lord, ſaith he, is *not willing that* Any *ſhould periſh, but that* All *ſhould come to Repentance*: To *Repentance*; That is, to a real and *effectual Amendment and Reformation of Life*; Which is Always the meaning of *Repentance* in Scripture. Some Writers have contended, that, in theſe ſeveral Texts, the words, *All men*, muſt be underſtood to ſignify only, *Some* of *All ſorts* of men, *Some* from among the *Jews*, *Some* from among the *Gentiles*, *Some* from among the *Rich*, *Some* from among the *Poor*; and the like. But This interpretation ariſes merely from a great Unskilfulneſs in Language. For though the words *All men*, do indeed in Scripture, as in *vulgar* Speech, ſignify very frequently, not *All* men *abſolutely*, but, in a limited ſenſe, *All* againſt whom no exception is plainly underſtood; yet in no *language*, according to *Any* vulgar manner of ſpeaking, can they mean, *Some* only *out of every Sort of men*; and conſequently in *Scripture*, which always expreſſes itſelf in the language of the Vulgar, the words cannot poſſibly have *That Meaning*. But the Senſe plainly is, that God really and ſincerely intends the Salvation of *All men*; and that 'tis for his *Own* Fault only, for *Wickedneſs* only, and *deliberate Unrighteouſneſs*, that Any man ſhall be condemned. Beſides the places before-cited, This great and fundamental Truth is ſtill *more clearly* (if more clearly it *can* be,) expreſſed in the xxiid chapter of the *Revelations*, ver. 16, 17; *I Jeſus have ſent mine Angel to teſtify unto you theſe things in the Churches:* —— *And the Spirit and the Bride ſay, Come; And let him that heareth, ſay, Come: And let him that is athirſt, come; And whoſoever will,* (*i. e.* whoſoever *will* live a virtuous life,) *let him take the Water of Life freely.* And, to add ſtill greater Weight to this ſolemn declaration; *God*, even the *Father* himſelf in Perſon, is introduced as affirming the ſame thing from the Throne of his Glory; ch. xxi. 5, 6, *And he that ſat upon the Throne, ſaid;* — *theſe words are true and faithful;* — *I will give unto him that is athirſt, of the Fountain of the Water of Life freely; He that overcometh,* (that is, who reſiſts the temptations of a wicked and debauched World,) *ſhall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son.* The Senſe is the ſame, as in the words of my Text; *He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.*

This therefore is the *Firſt* Particular. God offers to *All men* the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation.

II. The *Second* is: That This Offer, though graciouſly made to *All*, yet in Event becomes *effectual* to *Thoſe only*, who are *qualified* and *capable* to *receive* it. But referring This to a further Opportunity, I ſhall conclude at preſent with This *One* inference from what has been already ſaid; *viz.* That from hence all *unrighteous*, all *wicked* and *debauched* perſons, being convinced that the deſtruction is *of themſelves*, if they continue in the Practice of Unrighteouſneſs; and not from any Appointment of *God*; may be prevailed with to reform their Lives, while they have yet Time. That *ſo* they may eſcape the Wrath of God, from which there is *no other* poſſible Means of eſcaping.

SERMON

SERMON LXVI.

The Qualifications neceſſary to receive the Terms of Salvation,

REV. ii. 29.

He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.

SERM. LXVI.

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words of our Saviour, I have propoſed to deduce from them the four following Doctrinal Obſervations. *1ſt*, that God, the Great Creator, and righteous Governor, and merciful Judge of the whole Earth, offers to *all men* the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation: *Let him hear*; (let *every man* hear,) *what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches*. *2dly*, that This Offer, 'tho' graciouſly made to *All*, yet in Event becomes *effectual* to *Thoſe only*, who are *qualified* and *capable* to *receive it*: *He that hath an* Ear, *let him hear*. *3dly*, That they who *want* an *Ear*; they who *want* the *diſpoſitions neceſſary* to their receiving and embracing this gracious Offer of Salvation, or are prevented by any of the *Hindrances* which render it ineffectual; are always very ſeverely reproved

reproved in Scripture, plainly denoting it to be *their own Fault*, that they have not *Ears to hear*. 4*thly* and *Laſtly*; That hence conſequently All thoſe Paſſages of Scripture, wherein God is at any time repreſented as *blinding* men's *Eyes*, or *cloſing* their *Ears*, or *hardning* their *Hearts*, or *taking away* their *Underſtanding* from them; muſt of neceſſity be underſtood to be *figurative* Expreſſions only; not denoting literally What God actually effects by his Power, but what by his Providence he juſtly and wiſely permits.

The *Firſt* of theſe, I have already gone through; that God offers to *All men* the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation: Let *him hear*, (let *every man* hear, *what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches*. I proceed Now to the *Second* General Head:

II. That this Offer of Salvation though graciouſly made to *All*, yet in Event becomes *effectual* to *Thoſe only*, who are *qualified* and *capable* to *receive* it: *He that hath an* Ear, *let him hear*. *Light* introduced upon Any Object, ſuppoſes always that there be *Eyes* to view, and to diſcern it *by That Light*. The *Sound* of a *Voice*, or the Uſe of *Speech* ſuppoſes always that men have *Ears* to hear, what the Speaker uttereth. *Truth* and *Right Reaſon* and *Argument*, *Theſe* likewiſe ſuppoſe always that men have *Senſe* and *Underſtanding*, to judge of what is offered to their conſideration. And, in matters of *Religion*; God's offering to men certain *Terms* or *Conditions* of Salvation, ſuppoſes in like manner a certain *moral Diſpoſition* in the Mind, which cauſes it to have a *Regard* to things of That nature, to have a *Senſe* and *Reliſh* of things relating to *Morality*: Otherwiſe *Men* would, in their *Nature*, be no more *capable* of Religion, than Beaſts. *Sweetneſs* is No *Sweetneſs* to a perſon whoſe Palate has no *Taſte*: *Light* is No *Light*, to him who has put out his own *Eyes*: And *Religion*, or the *Preaching of the Goſpel*, is as *Nothing* to That Man, whoſe Mind has *no Regard* to, nor *Care* to make any *Diſtinction* between, what in the nature of things is *moral* and *immoral*. St. *Paul* ſets *This* obſervation in a very clear light, 1 *Cor.* ii. 14; *The* natural *man* (ſays he) receiveth not *the things of the Spirit of God*; *for they are Fooliſhneſs unto him*; *neither* can he *know them*, *becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned*. The words are not rightly rendred, *The* Natural *man*; as if God had made men, *naturally*, incapable of Religion. Which is the very ſame thing, as it would be to find Fault with a Man for *not Seeing*, when he was *Born Blind*. But the *True meaning* of the Apoſtle, is, *The* Senſual *man*; He who, by habitual Debauchery, by a courſe of Any vitious or corrupt Practice, has extinguiſhed the Eyes of his own Underſtanding; ſuch a one *can* have no true Senſe of things relating to Religion, of things which are only ſpiritually diſcerned. Our Saviour repreſents the ſame notion to us, in a very lively and expreſſive ſimilitude, St. *Matt.* xi. 17; where he compares the *Phariſees*, who hated to ſee Truth in *Any* Light, and refuſed to hear Reaſon under *Any* form; (who were neither moved by *John Baptiſt*'s preaching, who had come in the more *reſerved* and *auſtere* way; nor by our Saviour's *own* preaching, who came in the more *free* way of converſation and inſtruction;) he compares them to *children ſitting in the markets, and calling unto their Fellows, and ſaying; We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented:* They had *No Ear*; they *heard* not; they gave *no Attention*; they *knew nothing* of the *Tune* which their Fellows play'd to them, in *what* manner *ſoever* they diverſifyed it. The *Application* our Lord makes of the ſimilitude, is; that to argue with the Phariſees about *morality* about the *true* nature of *religion* and *virtue*, in *what* manner *ſoever* it was done; whether in *John Baptiſt*'s more *ſevere* way, or in his own more *mild* way; 'twas All One; 'twas talking to them about a matter they had no ſenſe of; 'twas ſpeaking to them in a ſtrange Tongue, in a Language they underſtood nothing of. There is an Alluſion to the *ſame* Similitude, in *Rev.* xiv. 3. *No man* could *learn That Song*, *but the one hundred and forty four thouſand*, *which were redeemed from the Earth*: No man *can* Underſtand and Practiſe the Religion of *Heaven*, but they who by a worthy diſpoſition of Mind, by an habitual Love of Truth and Virtue, are qualified to be redeemed from the *Earth*. Theſe are the Perſons, whom our Lord calls his *Sheep*; which *hear* and *know* his Voice, *Joh.* x. 27: Who readily perceive the excellency of his Doctrine, and its perfect agreeableneſs to eternal Truth and Reaſon:

SERM. LXVI.

Who receive inſtruction in the ways of Truth and Righteouſneſs with the *ſame kind* of Pleaſure, as the Eye is entertained with at the Approach at Light: Who *come unto Chriſt* becauſe the Father *draws them*; That is, becauſe their Love of Right and Equity, which is *natural* religion, recommends to them That which is *revealed*; and, thro' the Love of Righteouſneſs and true Virtue, they are *led* to believe and embrace the Goſpel of Chriſt. Theſe are They, of whom our Lord declares, *Matt.* xiii. 12, *Whoſoever hath, to Him ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more Abundance.* But, on the contrary, *Whoſoever hath not, from Him ſhall be taken away even That he hath:* Whoſoever is ſo inſenſible of the eſſential and eternal Differences of Good and Evil; whoſoever hath ſo *little Diſcernment* in matters of religion, as to think *Any thing whatſoever* can be an equivalent for the neglect or Breach of the *leaſt Moral Virtue*; *whoſoever ſhall break one of theſe* leaſt *commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo; he ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven:* That is, he ſhall be the *Laſt perſon* that ſhall be admitted there, or ſhall be very far from *ever* entring therein at all. Thus, tho' the Offer of Salvation is graciouſly made to *All*, yet in event it becomes *effectual* to *Thoſe only*, who are *qualified* and *capable* to *receive* it.

In order to make which Doctrine more uſeful to us in Practice, I ſhall proceed to ſhow diſtinctly, 1*ſt*, *in general*, that That Diſpoſition of Mind, which qualifies and makes men capable to receive and embrace effectually the Terms of Salvation, is ſomewhat which the Scripture always ſpeaks of, as a matter of *ſingular excellency*, and worthy of *Great Commendation*. 2*dly*, In what *Particulars* this excellent temper and diſpoſition principally conſiſts. And 3*dly*, What are the *oppoſite* Qualities, or chief *Hindrances*, which generally *prevent* the Offers of Salvation from being *effectually* embraced.

Firſt; I obſerve *in general*, that That Diſpoſition of Mind which qualifies and makes Men capable to receive and embrace effectually the Terms of Salvation, is ſomewhat which the Scripture always ſpeaks of, as a matter of *ſingular Excellency*, and worthy of *Great Commendation*. 'Tis an eminent *Gift*, or *Grace*, of *God*; not in the ſenſe of *Thoſe*, who think God works upon men *mechanically*, as upon mere *Machines*, but in ſuch a Senſe, as *Reaſon* is the Gift of God, which makes us to be *Men*, to be *rational* and *intelligent* Creatures. Which we receive indeed wholly from God the Author of our Being; and yet 'tis a commendable and praiſeworthy Excellency in him that has it, becauſe, in the *Uſe* and *Exerciſe* of it, it depends entirely upon the *Free Will* of the perſon himſelf, either to *uſe* or to *abuſe* it, either to *improve* or to neglect and *loſe* it. Upon which account, St. *Peter*'s Admonition is both very elegant and very exact; 2 *Pet.* iii. 18, *Grow in Grace.* The Thing to be acquired, is the Free *Gift* of God; and yet his Exhortation ſuppoſes it to be their own Duty, and conſequently in their own Power, to *receive*, to *uſe*, and to *improve* That Gift. And becauſe, though *all* men are created *rational*, yet *Few* actually make uſe of their *reaſon*; though *all* men are indued with the Senſe of *Hearing*, yet *Few* (as our Saviour in the Text expreſſes it) *have an Ear* to *hear*; therefore That Temper, That Spirit, That Diſpoſition of Mind, which is in Scripture denoted by this *figurative Phraſe*, is therein always ſet forth, under characters of the *Higheſt Excellency* and *ſingular Diſtinction*. 'Tis That, which cauſes men to prefer *God* and Virtue before the ſinful enjoyments of a vitious and corrupt World; to chooſe *Truth* and *Right* and *Reaſon*, before *popular Error* and *prevailing Wrong*; to ſtrive to enter in at the *ſtrait gate*, rather than accompany the *Power*, and the *Numbers*, of an unrighteous and debauched age. 'Tis *This*, that, even in the *Heathen* world, cauſed *Socrates* to chooſe *Death* rather than not maintain the Knowledge of *the One True God* againſt his ſuperſtitious and idolatrous Countrymen. 'Tis *This*, that made the *Patriarchs* of old, to go out from their native Country, not knowing whither they went. 'Tis *This*, that, in *Elijah*'s time, when the whole Houſe of *Iſrael* had departed from God, and introduced almoſt univerſally a falſe Religion, cauſed ſeven thouſand men to diſtinguiſh themſelves, by forbearing to bow the knee to *Baal*. They *loved*, and *hearkned to*, Truth: They had an *Ear* to diſcern the Voice of God, even in the midſt of the moſt corrupt Times and Nations; and they *choſe*, to *follow* That *Call*. And by *adhering to* That Choice, with Courage, Patience, and Perſeverance;

rance; they acquired to themſelves the Character of thoſe whom the Prophet *Malachi* ſpeaks of *ch.* iii. 17, *They ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, in That day when I make up my* Jewels: And whom our *Saviour* deſcribes, as perſons *thought* worthy *to obtain* That *Life, and the Reſurrection from the Dead:* And calls them his elect, *which ſhall be gathered together from the four winds, from every corner under Heaven*: And whom St. *Paul* means, when he applies to *Chriſtians* That Paſſage of the Prophet, *Though Iſrael be as the Sand of the Sea, yet a* Remnant *ſhall be ſaved*: And of whom, *Laſtly*, St. *John* ſpeaks, *Rev.* xv. 2, when he ſaw in his viſion *Them that had gotten the Victory over the Beaſt:* In the Original it is, *which from out of the* midſt of the *Beaſt*, that is, from the midſt of the moſt idolatrous and wicked, the moſt corrupt and perverſe Generations, had *ſaved themſelves*, and *overcome* the Temptations of a corrupt World. But This in *General*: I proceed now in the SERM. LXVI.

Second place, to conſider *more* particularly, *Wherein* conſiſts This excellent Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, which qualifies Men to receive thus effectually, and to embrace ſtedfaſtly, the Terms of Salvation propoſed to them; And in *What Particulars* This Diſpoſition principally ſhows forth itſelf. And

1*ſt*; The *firſt* Inſtance wherein this Good Diſpoſition ſhows forth itſelf, is *Attentiveneſs* or *Conſideration*. Without *Attention* and *Conſideration*, a Man's Mind is in the ſame State with regard to *religious* Knowledge, as it would be with regard to the Knowledge of things in the *World*, had his *Eyes* always been *cloſed*, and his *Ears* always *ſtopped*. God has given us *Faculties* of the *Mind*, to *underſtand*, juſt as he has given us *Senſes* in the *Body* to *perceive*. Neither the *One* nor the *Other* are of Any Uſe, unleſs *applied* and *attending to* their proper Objects. He that hath *an Ear*, muſt *hearken*: And he that hath *Underſtanding*, muſt *attend*. *Behold*, (ſays our Saviour to his Diſciples, when he had foretold them how *falſe Prophets* and falſe Teachers ſhould ariſe and deceive the whole World; *Behold*, ſaith he, (*take Notice*,) *I have told you before*, Matt. xxiv. 25. And *Moſes*, when he had delivered to the *Iſraelites* the *Moral* part of the *Law*; *See*, ſaith he, *Deut.* xxx. 15; *See*, (that is, *Obſerve and Attend*,) *I have ſet before thee this day Life and Good, Death and Evil.*

2*dly*, The *ſecond* particular, wherein This excellent diſpoſition of Mind ſhews forth itſelf, (and which is the *natural* Conſequence of *Attention and Conſideration*,) is a *Delight* in *Examining* into *Truth and Right*; a *taking pleaſure* at all times in *beholding the Light*, and in *hearing the Voice*, of *Reaſon*. Among *ignorant* and among *ſuperſtitious* men, Nothing is more *neglected* than *Reaſon*; That Great Gift of God, That bright and ſingular Ornament of our Nature; which diſtinguiſhes us on the *one* hand from *irrational* natures, ſuch as are the *Beaſts* that periſh; and on the *other* hand from *unreaſonable* and *perverſe* natures, which is the character of *Devils*. But how far ſoever this Gift of *Reaſon* may be neglected by *corrupt* Minds; yet 'tis (as *Solomon* elegantly expreſſes it, *Prov.* xx. 27; 'tis) *the* candle *of the Lord, ſearching all the inward parts of the Belly*. Nor is there any ſeverer Puniſhment in This Life threatned any where in Scripture, than God's taking away men's Reaſon and Underſtanding from them; *Job* xviii. 5. *The Light of the Wicked ſhall be put out, and the ſpark of his Fire ſhall not ſhine; The Light ſhall be dark in his Tabernacle, and his Candle ſhall be put out with him.* To *This Light* God *requires* us to attend; and They who do ſo, are *acceptable* to him. And he *appeals* to men to judge thereby, even concerning his *own* Proceedings with them: *If.* i. 18. *Come now, and let us* reaſon *together, ſaith the Lord*; and, *Let us* plead *together*, ch. xliii. 26; Judge, *I pray you, betwixt Me and my Vineyard.* Which *Appeal* of *God* to the *Reaſon* of *Mankind* for the *Equity* of his Dealings with them, is alluded to in That Paſſage of the *Pſalmiſt*, cited by St. *Paul. Rom*, iii. 4. *That thou mighteſt be* juſtified *in thy Sayings, and mighteſt overcome when thou art judged.* Now if we are required to *judge* in this manner concerning *God*'s dealings with *Us*; much *more* muſt it needs be criminal in us to neglect to make uſe of this Light in judging what *we* are to do *Ourſelves*. Our Saviour *reproves* the *Jews*, Luke xii. 57, *Why even of* yourſelves (ſaith he) *judge ye not what is right?* And St. *Paul* ſpeaks in like manner to *Chriſtians*, 1 Cor. xi. 13. *Judge in* yourſelves, *is it comely?* and again, *ch.* x. 15. *I ſpeak as to wiſe men*, that is, to *reaſonable and intelligent* perſons; *judge ye what I ſay.* Micah. vi. 2, 3. Iſ. v. 3.

From

SERM. LXVI.

From the Texts cited under This Head, I cannot but obſerve here by the way, that the Scripture (in direct oppoſition to the *Romiſh* doctrine) every where *ſuppoſes*, that men muſt of neceſſity *judge for themſelves* in matters of Religion: And that there is *never* any *Infallible Guide*, *There* recommended; *never* any *Credulity*, or *Implicit Faith* in *Men*, *There* required or incouraged. As indeed, in the very *nature of things*, how is it at all *poſſible*, that ignorant and unlearned men ſhould be able to look over the World, and to ſee and judge *Which* of all Nations is the fitteſt to be relied on implicitly? On the contrary, men are always in Scripture *ſuppoſed* to have *an Ear*; and they are *commanded* to *hear*, and to *conſider*: To *call no man Maſter upon Earth*, but *themſelves* to prove *all things*, and to Try *the Spirits whether they be of God*: To ſatisfy their *Own minds*; as *Abraham*, Heb. xi. 19, accounted, (in the original it is, Reaſoned *with himſelf*,) that God *Could* raiſe his Son from the dead: And to be able alſo to give Satisfaction to *Others*, who at any time *ask them a Reaſon of the Hope that is in them*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. In the Great and Weighty Matters of Religion, the forming of This Judgment is not a Buſineſs of Skill, of Parts and Learning; but of Integrity and Simplicity of Mind. Which whoſoever is indued with, though otherwiſe of mean Abilities, will judge better concerning any religious and moral Truth, than the moſt Learned Philoſopher in the World. But if this Simplicity of Judgment, this natural Eye and Guide of the Mind, be *itſelf* corrupted and depraved by Vice or Superſtition, no wonder if men fall into endleſs and inextricable Errors. Our Saviour excellently repreſents this to us, *Matt.* vi. 22; *The Light of the Body is the Eye: If therefore thine Eye be ſingle, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Light: But if thine* Eye *be Evil, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Darkneſs: If therefore the* Light *that is in thee be darkneſs, how great is That darkneſs!* The Mind of a Man, whoſe moral judgment is thus vitiated by departing from the Guidance of Reaſon and from The Love of Truth, is, in the *ſpiritual* ſenſe, *a land of Darkneſs as Darkneſs itſelf, and of the ſhadow of Death, without any order, and where the Light is as Darkneſs*, Job. x. 22.

3dly, Therefore; The *Third* and *Principal* Particular, wherein conſiſts That excellent Temper and Diſpoſition of Spirit which fits and qualifies men to embrace effectually the Terms of Salvation, is *Moral Probity*, *Sincerity*, *and Integrity of Mind*. If any *man will* do *his Will*, *he* ſhall *know of the Doctrine*, *whether it be of God*, Jo. vii. 17. *If thou deſire Wiſdom*, *keep the Commandments*, *and the Lord ſhall give her unto thee*; For *he that* keepeth *the Law of the Lord*, *getteth the Underſtanding thereof*, Eccluſ. i. 26, xxi. 11. This is what our Saviour, in his Parable calls the *Good Ground*, which brings forth *ſixty* and an *hundred fold*. Theſe are the perſons which our Lord calls his *Sheep*; which *hear and know* his *Voice*. Theſe are they, of whom we read that they are *ordained*, or (as the *Greek* ſignifies,) *prepared* and *ſet in Order to* receive the Means of *eternal Life*. Theſe are they to whom 'tis promiſed, that *the Wiſe* ſhall *underſtand*; that *the Meek*, *God will guide in judgment*; *and ſuch as are gentle*, *Them he* will *teach his Way*. Of this kind was *Nathaniel*; of whom our Saviour declared, when he *firſt* ſaw him, *Behold an Iſraelite indeed*, *in whom there is No Guile*. Of the ſame kind ſeems to have been That *Other* perſon, to whom our Saviour ſaid, *Mar.* xii. 34. (though indeed it is not recorded in the Goſpel, what *further* Progreſs he afterwards made;) *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*. *Laſtly*, of This kind are All Thoſe, who come unto *Chriſt*, becauſe the *Father* draws them; that is, who through the *Love* of *God*, through the *Love* of *Righteouſneſs and true Virtue*, are led to believe and embrace the *Goſpel of Chriſt*. For

Joh. x. 27. Acts xiii. 48.

Dan. xii. 10. Pſ. xxv. 9, 14.

Jo. i. 47.

Joh. vi. 44.

4thly, The *fourth* and *laſt* Inſtance, wherein this Good Diſpoſition I am ſpeaking of, ſhows forth itſelf, is a *Readineſs* to *hearken* to the Voice of Revelation, as well as of *Reaſon*. A well-diſpoſed mind preſently feels the *Goodneſs*, and is ſtruck with a ſenſe of the *Beauty and Excellency*, and acknowledgeth the *agreeableneſs* of the *Doctrine of Chriſt*, to the *eternal Truths of Nature*. And This *real* Harmony of Reaſon and Revelation, not any Enthuſiaſtick *Fancy*, is the true *internal* evidence of Scripture; is God's *Spirit*, bearing Witneſs with *Our's*. St. *Paul*, Rom. x. 8. applies to the *Goſpel*, what *Moſes* had ſaid of the *Moral Law*, The *Word is Nigh thee*, *even in thy Mouth and in thy Heart*: 'Tis, in a manner, almoſt *connatural* to a reaſonable and well-diſpoſed Mind. *The Sound* of the Apoſtle's Preaching,

Preaching, ſaith he again, *ver.* 18. (what by the *Pſalmiſt* was ſpoken concerning the Motion of the *Stars of Heaven*,) *Their Sound*, ſays he, is *gone forth into all Lands, and their words unto the Ends of the World.* He that hath *Ears* to *hear cannot but hear* their Doctrine; He that has *Eyes* to *ſee*, even tho' he *runs*, may *read* it; He that has *Underſtanding* and *Probity of Mind* to *apprehend*, cannot but *embrace* it, when propoſed to him fairly and uncorruptly. As the regular *Motions* of the *Stars* in the Heavens, are an undeniable Proof of the *Power* and *Wiſdom of God*, and of the conſequent Obligations of Natural *Religion*; ſo the *Doctrine of the* Goſpel carries along with it, to reaſonable Minds, by its intrinſick Excellency, bright Evidences of *Divine Truth* in what it *reveals*. Chriſt is *come a* Light *into the World*, And the *Goſpel* is the Light *of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt*; *ſhining in our Hearts*, ſaith St. *Paul*, as conſpicuouſly in the *Moral* Senſe, as in the *natural* ſenſe God originally, at the creation of the World, cauſed the *Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Again, Our Saviour himſelf uſes the ſame Similitude, *Luke* xvii. 21. *The Kingdom of God*, ſays he, *is* within *you*: — *And if they ſhould ſay to you, See here, or See there; go not after them, nor follow them: For as the Lightning that lightneth out of the one part under heaven, ſhineth unto the other part under heaven; ſo ſhall alſo the Son of Man be in his day.* This univerſal Light of revealed Truth is to be found by all men, not by following This or the Other *particular man* or *Body of men* as a *Guide*; which is the *very thing* our Lord forbids in the Paſſage now cited: But 'tis to be found only by attending to the *Revelation itſelf*: According to our Saviour's direction, *Search the Scriptures*; And after the Example of Thoſe, whom we find particularly commended, *Acts* xvii. 11. for *ſearching the Scriptures daily, whether the things that were* taught them, *were ſo* or no: The conſequence of which, was, that they *received the word* (ſo the Text expreſſes it,) *with all readineſs of Mind.*

SERM. LXVI.

Hab. ii. 2.

Pſ. xix. 1. Rom. x. 18.

Joh. xii. 46.

Theſe are the Principal *Particulars*, wherein conſiſts that excellent Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, which qualifies and makes men capable to receive and embrace effectually the Terms of Salvation. The

Third and *Laſt* thing I propoſed to conſider under *This* Head, was; what are the *oppoſite* Qualities, or chief *Hindrances*, which generally *prevent* the Offers of Salvation from being effectually embraced. Of theſe, the

1*ſt* is *Careleſneſs*, and *Want of Attention.* Which Temper cannot poſſibly be deſcribed in any livelier and more expreſſive manner, than it is by our Saviour in the following Similitude, *Luke* viii. 5, *A Sower went out to ſow his Seed; and as he ſowed, ſome fell by the way's ſide, and it was trodden down, and the Fowls of the Air devoured it.* The

2*d* Hindrance, is *Prejudice* or *Prepoſſeſſion.* This was the Caſe of the *Jews in general*, concerning whom St. *Paul* ſays, that *the Veil was upon their Heart*, 2 Cor. iii. 15: And of thoſe *Phariſees* more *particularly*, to whom our Lord ſaid, *Matt.* ix. 13. *Go ye and learn what That meaneth, I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice.* Falſe and ſuperſtitious Notions; or groundleſs, unreaſonable, unintelligible Opinions in religion, taken up upon *Prejudice*, are a greater Impediment to Truth, than even the moſt Profound Ignorance. The

3*d* Hindrance, is *Perverſeneſs* and *Obſtinacy.* This Temper is admirably expreſſed in Scripture by That Phraſe of a *ſtony Heart.* Zech. vii. 12. *They ſtopped their Ears that they ſhould not hear; yea, they made their Hearts as an* Adamant-ſtone, *leſt they ſhould hear the Law.* This was eminently the Temper of thoſe Jews, who becauſe *John the Baptiſt* came *neither eating nor drinking* they ſaid *He hath a Devil*; and becauſe *Chriſt* came *both eating and drinking*, they ſaid he was *a wine-bibber and a glutton*: But in *Both theſe* and in all *other* various circumſtances, Wiſdom is juſtified *of all her children.* The

4*th* and *laſt*, and of all Others the *Greateſt* Impediment, is a *Love of Vice. Into* a Malicious *Soul*, ſaith the Scripture, *Wiſdom will not enter*; and *None of the Wicked ſhall underſtand.* Concerning ſuch a Perſon, St. *John* elegantly expreſſes himſelf, that *Darkneſs has blinded his eyes*, 1 *Joh.* ii. 11. St. *Paul*, by a like figure of Speech, calls it *Blindneſs of* Heart, Eph. iv. 18: and tells us that *the God of this World has* blinded the minds *of* ſome men, 2 Cor. iv. 4; and deludes them with *all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs*; becauſe they have not a *Love of the Truth, that*

Wiſd. ii. 4. Dan. xii. 10.

SERM. LXVI.

they might be ſaved; but take pleaſure *in unrighteouſneſs*, 2 Th. ii. 10, 12; placing their Religion in *any* thing rather than in true Virtue. And our Saviour, in a phraſe very like to That in my Text, upbraids the Phariſees, *Joh.* viii. 43, *Why do ye not underſtand my Speech; even becauſe ye* cannot hear *my word: Ye are of your Father the Devil; and the Luſts of your Father ye will do.* They had a ſtrong Love to ſome Great Vices, which they were very unwilling to reform; and therefore they had *No Ear*, to *hear His Words*.

Thus have I largely ſhown, (which was my II*d* General Head of Diſcourſe,) that the Offer of Salvation, tho' graciouſly made to *All*, yet in Event becomes *effectual* to *Thoſe only* who are *qualified* and *capable* to *receive* it: *He that hath an* Ear, *let him hear.* The

III*d*, Propoſition was, that they who want an *Ear*; they who *want* the *Diſpoſitions neceſſary* to their receiving and embracing this gracious Offer of Salvation, or are prevented by any of the *hindrances* which render it ineffectual, are always very ſeverely reproved in Scripture, plainly denoting it to be their *own Fault*, that they have not *Ears to hear*.

SERMON

SERMON LXVII.

Mens not accepting the Terms of Salvation is from Themſelves.

REV. ii. 29.

He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.

THE Obſervations or Doctrines I have propoſed to diſcourſe upon from theſe Words of our Saviour, are Four. *1ſt*, That God, the Great Creator, and righteous Governour, and merciful Judge of the whole Earth, offers to *All men* the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation: Let *him hear*, (let *every man* hear,) what the *Spirit ſaith unto the Churches*. *2dly*, That this Offer, though graciouſly made to *All*, yet in Event becomes *effectual* to *Thoſe only*, who are *qualified* and *capable* to *receive* it: *He that hath an* Ear *let him hear*. *3dly*, That They who *want* an *Ear*; they who *want* the *diſpoſitions neceſſary* to their receiving and embracing this gracious Offer of Salvation, or are prevented by any of the *Hindrances* which render it *ineffectual*, are always very ſeverely reproved in Scripture, plainly denoting it to be their *Own Fault*, that they have not *Ears to hear*. *4thly* and *Laſtly*, That hence conſequently All thoſe Paſ-

ſages

SERM. LXVII.

ſages of Scripture, wherein God is at any time repreſented as *blinding* mens *Eyes*, or *cloſing* their *Ears*, or *hardening* their *Hearts*, or *taking away* their *Underſtanding* from them, muſt of neceſſity be underſtood to be *figurative* Expreſſions only; not denoting literally what God actually effects by his Power, but what by his Providence he juſtly and wiſely permits.

The *Two former* of theſe Propoſitions I have already diſcourſed upon: That God offers to *All Men* the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation: And yet, that in Event This Offer becomes *effectual* to *Thoſe only*, who are *qualified* and *capable* to receive it: *He that hath an* Ear, *let him hear.*

I am now to proceed to the

III*d* general Obſervation: That they who want an *Ear*; they who *want* the *Diſpoſitions neceſſary* to their receiving and embracing This Gracious Offer of Salvation, or are prevented by any of the *Hindrances* which render it *ineffectual*, are always *very ſeverely reproved* in Scripture; plainly denoting it to be entirely their *Own Fault*, that they have not *Ears to hear.* The *Reaſon* is, becauſe theſe *neceſſary Diſpoſitions* are not *natural* but *moral* Qualifications; and the contrary *Impediments* are not *natural* but *moral* Defects. Did *Religion* depend upon the ſtrength or weakneſs of mens *natural Parts and Abilities* of *Mind*, as Quickneſs of *Hearing* or *Seeing* depends upon the Goodneſs of the *Bodily Organs* of *Senſe*; (Neither of which are at all in mens *Own Power*;) It would follow, that *Want of Religion* was no more blame-worthy, than the Want of *good Eyes* or the Want of *deep Underſtanding.* But *Religion* depends *entirely* upon ſuch Qualities as are *Moral*; and the Capacity of *Hearing* mentioned in the Text hath evidently relation to the *Heart*, and *Will* of the Hearer. Of This we have a moſt expreſs and undeniable Evidence, in that eloquent and ſharp Reproof given by St. *Stephen* to the Jews, *Acts* vii. 51, *Ye ſtiff-necked and uncircumciſed in Heart and* Ears, *ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt.* Every one that heard him *well* underſtood, that his calling them *uncircumciſed in Heart and* Ears, was no more meant as a Cenſure upon their *natural Underſtanding*, than upon their *Bodily Organs*; but that it was a ſevere Rebuke upon them for *Another* kind of Defect, whereof they could by no means lay the Blame either upon God or Nature. Perſons of the *Meaneſt* natural *Capacities* may have a Mind *Attentive* to inſtruction; may have a *Love* to *Truth and Right*; may have great *Probity* and *Integrity* of Heart: Which *weak things of the Word* (as St. *Paul* elegantly ſtiles them) are in religion much ſuperior to *the things that are Mighty.* And on the contrary; men of the *Greateſt Abilities* in *other* reſpects may yet very poſſibly have *no* Reliſh of *moral* Truths; may lie under powerful *Prejudices*; may be very *Perverſe* in their Tempers; or may have violent *Paſſions*, and ſtrong Affections to particular *Vices.* Upon which Account, St. *Paul* tells us that *not many Wiſe men after the Fleſh, not many Mighty, not many Noble are called*: It being very poſſible, that ſuch perſons, notwithſtanding *All Other* Advantages both of *Mind* and *Fortune*, yet, as to the matter of *Religion*, may be in the State our Saviour repreſents the Church of *Laodicea*, Rev. iii. 17, *Thou ſayeſt, I am rich,— and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Whoever has once carefully conſidered This, will find *no* difficulty in underſtanding ſuch expreſſions as Theſe; *Iſ.* xliii. 8, *Bring forth the Blind people that have Eyes, and the Deaf that have Ears:* And *Jer.* v. 21, *Hear now This, O fooliſh people, and without Underſtanding; which have Eyes and ſee not, which have Ears and hear not.* Again, *Iſ.* xlii. 18, 19, 20, *Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may ſee: Who is Blind, but my Servant; or deaf, as my Meſſenger that I ſent? — Seeing many things, but thou obſervedſt not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.* 'Tis evident from the *Manner* in which theſe Expreſſions are introduced in the reſpective Contexts, and from the *whole Tenor and Phraſeology* of Scripture, and from *particular additional Circumſtances* in *Other* Paſſages wherein the *like* Expreſſions are uſed; that none of theſe Phraſes ſignify *natural* Want of Capacity, which is an Object of Compaſſion; but a wilful *indiſpoſition to hear reaſon*, which is a moſt juſt ground for the ſevereſt Reproof. In *Ezek.* xii. 2, 'tis *Thus* expreſſed: *Son of Man, Thou dwelleſt in the midſt of a* rebellious *houſe, which have Eyes to ſee, and ſee not; they have Ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a* rebellious *houſe.* He does not ſay, they wanted *Capacity*, or *natural Underſtanding*; but

but they were a *Rebellious* houſe. They were the ſame, of whom he ſpeaks, ch. xxiv. 13, *I have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged.* In the *Goſpel* 'tis alledged by our Saviour, not as a *pitiable Infirmity*, but as an Argument of mens *Unworthineſs*, and of their *deſerving to be caſt off*: Mat. xiii. 13, Therefore *ſpeak I to them in Parables*, becauſe *they ſeeing, ſee not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they underſtand.* In the *natural* and *literal* ſenſe of the words; not to *ſee*, not to *hear*, not to *underſtand*, is no *Fault* at all. But when men ſeeing, *ſee not*; and hearing, *hear not*; *This* is the *great Reproach* of *human nature*, and what makes men *worthy* even to be *left without inſtruction.* Hence our Saviour could *not*, (ſo the Scripture expreſſes it:) *That is*, Agreeably to his general *Deſign* and *Method* of acting, he *could not* do *many* mighty works in his *own Country*, becauſe of their *Unbelief*: And he adviſes his *Diſciples*, after the example of his *own* Practice, *not* to *give that which is Holy unto the Dogs*, nor to *caſt their Pearls before Swine.* In obedience to which Direction, St. *Paul* tells the Jews who continued to reject his Preaching, after many repeated Admonitions, *Acts* xiii. 46, and xxviii. 28, *Seeing ye put from you the Word of God, and judge yourſelves unworthy of eternal Life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*; and They will *hear it.* In his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, after a more *gentle* manner of Reproof, but ſtill in way of *Reproof* it was, as for ſomething which was *entirely their own Fault*, that he complains of them as being *dull of Hearing*, ch. v. 11; and that They who *for the Time* ought to have been *Teachers* of *Others*, had ſtill need of being *Taught* Themſelves. This was a *Faulty and blame-worthy Imperfection*; a *Want of* Improvement *in Religion*; a *Want of employing* thoſe Talents, wherewith God had intruſted them; a *Want of* Growing *in Grace and in the Knowledge of God.* As for thoſe who are *Totally* ignorant, and have no *Diſcernment* at all in *Moral* Matters; of *Theſe*, the Scripture always ſpeaks with ſtill *Greater Indignation*, and with the utmoſt *Severity of Reproof*; as of perſons labouring under a *Defect*, the Blame whereof cannot poſſibly in Any wiſe be laid either upon *God* or *Nature*, but merely upon the *Wilful* and *Obſtinate Negligence* of the *Perſons themſelves.* They are like the *Deaf Adder*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *which* ſtoppeth *her ears, which* refuſeth *to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely:* They wilfully and obſtinately *refuſe* to conſider the *Reaſonableneſs*, and the *Proofs* of true religion. 'Tis not a *natural* Deafneſs, but a *Deafneſs* which proceeds from *ſtopping* the Ears, and *Refuſing* to hear the Voice of the Charmer. The Prophet *Jeremy*, ch. vi. 10, ſets forth this Caſe to us in a very bold and lively ſimilitude; *Behold*, ſaith he, *their* Ear *is* uncircumciſed, *and they* cannot *hearken*; *behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a* Reproach, *they have* no Delight *in it.* To which *beautiful* and *expreſſive Figure* of Speech St. *Stephen* plainly alludes, in that ſharp and cutting Reproof before-mentioned, *Acts* vii. 51, *Ye Stiff-necked, and Uncircumciſed in* Heart *and* Ears, *ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt.* St. *John*, by *Another Compariſon* of the *Like* Nature, tells us that whoſoever *hateth his Brother*, (that is, whoſoever thinks *Uncharitableneſs* to be conſiſtent with True Religion,) *is in* Darkneſs, *and — Darkneſs has* Blinded *his* Eyes, 1 *Joh.* ii. 11. Which being the caſe, 'tis no wonder that the Scripture here pronounces a *Woe* with a particular *Emphaſis*: Wo *be to them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs*, Iſai. v. 20. And though in Scripture-phraſe, 'tis to the Deluſions of *Satan* that this Moral Incapacity of men is frequently aſcribed; as when *Satan* is ſaid to *take away* the Word out of mens Hearts; and *Satan* has filled *their Hearts*; and the like: Yet this is never ſpoken by way of *Excuſe*, but always on the contrary, of *High Aggravation.* They, *out of whoſe Heart Satan taketh away the word*, are by our Saviour compared to, and *blamed* for being like unto, the *very worſt* and *moſt unfruitful* Ground. And *Ananias*, whoſe *Heart* Satan *had filled*, was asked by St. *Peter* in way of *ſevere Reproof*; Why *hath Satan filled*, (that is, *why* haſt thou been ſo *wicked*, ſo *covetous*, ſo *corrupt*, as to *ſuffer* Satan to fill) *thine Heart*, Acts v. 3. Nay, in all thoſe places, where *God himſelf* is repreſented as depriving men of their Underſtanding; 'tis ſtill always, (which is a *Demonſtration* of the True Meaning of ſuch Phraſes,) 'tis always (I ſay) in the way of moſt *ſevere Reproof* and *Blame*, to the Perſons of whom it is ſpoken. Of This we have a ſingular and very remarkable Inſtance, in *Deut.* xxix. 4: Where *Moſes* bitterly expoſtulating with the *Iſraelites* for their

SERM. LXVII.

Mat. xiii. 58. Mar. vi. 5. Mat. vii. 6,

SERM. LXVII.

incorrigible rebelliousness, *Thine eyes* (says he) *have seen the Signs, and those Great Miracles; Yet* the Lord hath not given *you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear unto this day.* Nothing ever was more evident, than that *Moses* here did not mean to affirm literally, that any thing was wanting on *God*'s part; (For he is *here* urging *That very Argument*, that *God* had done all that was fit for him to do;) but on the contrary his plain Intent was, in a most affectionate manner, to *expostulate* with the *people* for their *Negligence*, *Obstinacy* and *Perverseness*, in not being led by the Sight of God's Great and numerous Miracles, to Repentance. *Your own Eyes have Seen those Great Miracles:* Yet so unreasonably obstinate and perverse are ye, that *the Lord hath not given you*; i. e. all the Means he has used, have not caused in you *a Heart to perceive*, even *unto This day.* And This brings me to the

IV*th* and *Last* General Proposition: That, since the Scripture always thus *expressly* lays the *Blame* upon mens *selves*; hence consequently All those Passages, wherein *God* is at any time represented as *blinding* mens *Eyes*, or *closing* their *Ears*, or *hardning* their *Hearts*, or *taking away* their *Understanding* from them; must of Necessity be understood to be *figurative* expressions only; not denoting literally what God actually effects by his Power, but what by his Providence he justly and wisely permits. And because the Passages of This kind are very numerous, I shall, for Method's sake, distinguish them under the following Heads.

1*st*, Some of these sorts of expressions denote only the *general Analogy* or *Fitness* of the thing to be done.

2*dly*, Others of them, are only figurative *Acknowledgments* of the *universal Superintendency* of *Providence* over All Events; without whose *Permission*, nothing happens in the World.

3*dly*, Others of them, are only *Applications* of *Prophecies*, or *Declarations* of certain *Prophecies being fulfilled.*

4*thly* and *Lastly*, Some others of them, are *Denunciations* or *Threatnings* of God's justly and in a judicial manner *leaving* incorrigible men to *themselves*, after many repeated Provocations.

1*st*, Some of those Expressions, wherein God may seem to be represented as *blinding* men, and *hardening* them to *destruction*, do indeed in strictness denote *nothing* more, than the *general Analogy* or *Fitness* of the thing to be done. Thus *Prov.* xvi. 4, *The Lord has made all things for Himself*; (the true Rendring is, *The Lord has made all things, one answerable to another*;) *yea, even the wicked to the day of Evil*: That is, (as the Scripture elsewhere expresses it,) *The wicked is reserved to the day of Destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of Wrath*: *For the Good, are good things created from the Beginning*; *so* likewise *evil things for Sinners.*

Job xxi. 30. Eccluſ. xxxix. 25. xi. 16. xl. 9.

Again, 1 *Sam.* ii. 25, The Sons of *Eli hearkned not unto the Voice of their Father*, because *the Lord would slay them.* The reason here assigned, *because the Lord would slay them*, answers exactly to *That* expression in *modern* language, Because *they were Abandoned*, Profligate *or* Graceless. In which manner of speaking, nobody understands *Want of Grace* to be a charging of any Defect on *God*'s part, but a describing of the *Persons themselves* to be *worthy of Destruction.*

2*dly*, Some *other* Expressions of This kind, are only figurative *Acknowledgments* of the *universal Superintendency of Providence* over all events; without whose *Permission*, nothing happens in the world; without whom, not a *Sparrow* falls to the Ground, or a *Hair of our Head* perishes. Thus, in Scripture-language, God *delivers into his Neighbour's hand*, that is, Providence *permits to fall*, every person who happens to be *slain by Chance.* Thus *the* Lord smote *Nabal, that he died*; where the History is not recording a *Miracle*, but only the man's being struck with a mortal disease. And, *the* Lord smote *the Ethiopians before Asia*, that is, in the course of Providence they were defeated by him in Battle. And what *Moses* says concerning the King of *Heshbon*; *the Lord God* hardned *his Spirit, and made his Heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand*; and *Joshua* concerning the *Canaanites, it was of the Lord to* harden *their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly*; is plainly of the same import only, as if he had said, *it pleased God to let their Obstinacy destroy them.* Thus, *God's hardening Pharaoh's heart*, evidently means no more, than that the Miracles God

1 Sam. xxv. 38. Acts xii. 23. 2 Chron. xiv. 12. Deut. ii. 30. Josh xi. 20. Exod. iv. 21.

worked

worked before him, inſtead of convincing him as they ought to have done, made him only more obſtinate and ſtubborn. And when God ſays of him, *Rom.* ix. 17, *Even for this purpoſe have I raiſed thee up, that I might ſhew my Power in thee*; St. *Paul* thus explains it expreſly, ver. 22, *What if God willing to ſhow his Wrath, and to make his Power known, endured with much* long-ſuffering, *the Veſſels of Wrath, fitted to Deſtruction? Pharaoh* was by his Own Wickedneſs *fitted to Deſtruction*: God *endured him with much* long-ſuffering, and waited long for his Repentance: But he appearing incorrigible, God therefore choſe him as a proper Inſtrument, and *raiſed him up* into an *eminent Example*, upon whom he might *ſhow forth his Wrath, and make his Power known*; for a Terror to ſuch as ſhould imitate his Obſtinacy, in all ſucceeding generations. And exactly the ſame, was the Caſe of *Judas*. And *in general*, he *Hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardneth*; That is, *not* arbitrarily, irreſpectively, and without regard to mens behaviour: But the Meaning is; *God*, who knoweth the *Heart*, and not *We*, is the only Proper Judge, *who* are fit Objects of his Mercy, and *who* of his Wrath. Even in *Human* Judicatures, a *Judge* may very reaſonably be ſuppoſed to ſay to an ignorant multitude, not *arbitrarily*, but as having himſelf a moſt perfect knowledge both of the *Law* and of the *Fact*; *I* will *acquit whom I* will *acquit*; *and I* will *condemn whom I ſee fit to condemn*. And that *This* is indeed the *whole* meaning of the word, *harden*, appears clearly from hence; that 'tis uſed, not only of *Pharaoh* and *Other Enemies*, but alſo of God's *own people*. Iſ. lxiii. 17, *Lord, why haſt thou* made *us to err from thy ways, and* hardned *our heart from thy Fear?* Undoubtedly the Prophet in This Prayer, did not mean to charge *God* with the Sins of the People; but merely to expreſs his Sorrow for their being, in *fact*, corrupted. And, in the place before-cited, *Deut.* xxix 4, *The Lord*, ſays *Moſes* by way of expoſtulation to the people, *hath not given you an Heart to perceive*; that is, his many wondrous Works have not yet had their due Effect upon you. And concerning our Lord's *Diſciples themſelves*, 'tis written in the Goſpel, *Mar.* vi. 52, viii. 17, that *they conſidered not the Miracle; for their Heart was* hardned: Which is thus explained, *Luke* ix. 45, xviii. 34, *They underſtood not this Saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not.*

SERM. LXVII.

To give but *One* inſtance, or Two, more. By comparing 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 1, with 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1; it appears evidently, that God's moving *David*; or Satan's provoking him; or *his* own *diſtruſtful Heart* tempting him to number the People; are All Phraſes, that have one and the ſame Meaning. In like manner The men of *Sechem*'s falling out with, and *dealing treacherouſly* with *Abimelech*, Judg. ix. 23, is ſtiled, God's *ſending an Evil Spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem*: The Princes of *Egypt* acting *fooliſhly*, in *Iſ.* xx. 14, is; *The* Lord *has mingled a perverſe Spirit in the midſt thereof*. The *Hypocriſy* of the *Jews*, in *drawing near with their mouth, and honouring God with their Lips, when they had removed their Heart far from him*, Iſ. xxix. 13, is Thus expreſſed juſt before, ver. 10, *The* Lord *hath poured out upon you the Spirit of deep Sleep, and hath cloſed your Eyes*. And the Prophet *Jeremy*'s Prayer, ch. iv. 10, *Ah Lord God, ſurely* Thou *haſt greatly deceived this people*; evidently was not intended as charging *God* with cauſing the people to err, but merely as an expreſſion of his Sorrow for their being juſtly ſuffered to err. But

3*dly*, Some *Other* Expreſſions of this kind are Only *Applications* of *Prophecies*, or *Declarations* of certain *Prophecies being fulfilled*. Thus *Jude* 4; *Ungodly Men, who were* before of Old ordained *to this condemnation*; *whereunto alſo they were* appointed, 1 *Pet.* ii. 8. Not, appointed of God to be Wicked, but *foretold* by the Antient Prophets, that ſuch perſons would ariſe. Of the like ſenſe, are the following expreſſions, *Dan.* xii. 10, *The wicked* ſhall *do wickedly*. 2 Tim. iii. 13, *Evil men and Seducers* ſhall *wax worſe and worſe, deceiving and being deceived*. And *Rev.* xvii. 17, God *hath* put *it in their Hearts to fulfil his Will*, (that is, hath cauſed them, not by influencing of their Wills, but by his all-wiſe Conduct of Providential Events, he hath cauſed them to accompliſh the Prophecies,) *and to agree, and give their Kingdom unto the Beaſt, until the Words of God ſhall be fulfilled*. And *Rom.* xi. 7, 10, *The election*, (that is, the elect people, thoſe who believe in Chriſt,) *have obtained it, and the reſt* (*i. e.* the Unbelievers) *were blinded*: Accord-

ing

SERM. LXVII.

ing as *it is written, God has given them the Spirit of ſlumber, Eyes that they ſhould not ſee, and Ears that they ſhould not hear.* —— *And David ſaith,* —— *Let their Eyes be darkned, that they may not ſee.*

But the moſt remarkable Text to This purpoſe in the Whole Scripture, is That in the xiith of St. *John*, ver. 37, 39, 40, *Though he had done ſo many Miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:* ——*Therefore they* could not *believe*, becauſe *that Eſaias ſaid, He hath blinded their Eyes, and hardned their Heart, that they ſhould not ſee with their Eyes, nor underſtand with their Heart, and be converted, and I ſhould heal them.* Evidently the Meaning of theſe words is not, that; *Iſaiah's Prophecy* was the *Reaſon* or *Cauſe* of the *Jews Unbelief*; but only that the *Jews Unbelief* was the *Accompliſhment* of *Iſaiah's Prophecy*. For as, in *many other* paſſages of the Goſpels, according to the Nature and Phraſeology of the Jewiſh language, 'tis written that ſuch a thing was done, that it might be fulfilled *which was ſpoken by the Prophet*; and yet 'tis certain the thing was not *therefore done* becauſe it *had been foretold*, but had *therefore been foretold* becauſe it *would certainly be done*; and the words, that it might *be fulfilled*, mean nothing more than, *thereby* Was *fulfilled*: So it is likewiſe in the *preſent* caſe; *They* could not *believe*, becauſe *that Iſaias had ſaid* it: That is, Their Unbelief was not to be wondred at; 'twas nothing more than what *Iſaiah* had foretold; and it could not indeed be expected of ſo corrupt a people, that they ſhould do better. That This is the true and only ſenſe of the Paſſage, will appear undeniably, by conſidering the *Original Prophecy itſelf*, and the manner how it is quoted in *Many Other* places of the New Teſtament. The words of *Iſaiah* are, ch. vi. 9, Go and tell this people, *Hear ye indeed but underſtand not; and ſee ye indeed, but perceive not; make the Heart of this people fat, and make their Ears heavy, and ſhut their Eyes; leſt they ſee with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and underſtand with their Heart, and convert and be healed.* Our Saviour himſelf, citing theſe words, applies them by way of *Reproof*, Matt. xiii. 13, Becauſe *they ſeeing, ſee not; and hearing they hear not;*—— *and in Them is fulfilled the Prophecy of Eſaias.* St. *Paul* cites and applies them in the way of a ſtill *ſharper Rebuke* to thoſe who rejected his Preaching; *Acts* xxviii. 26, Well *ſpake the Holy Ghoſt by Eſaias unto our Fathers, ſaying, Hearing ye ſhall hear, and ſhall not underſtand.* In St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*, they are *Thus* cited; That *ſeeing, they might not ſee; and hearing they might not underſtand*: Expreſſing, as is evident from the parallel Texts, not the *Deſign* of *God*, but the *Event* of the *Thing*: In the ſame ſenſe, as our Saviour ſays concerning *Himſelf*, *I come not to ſend Peace but a Sword*: And to the *Phariſees*, Joh. ix. 39, *For judgment I am come into this World*; that *they which ſee not, might ſee*; *and* that *they which ſee, might be made blind.* By comparing together all which ſeveral References to that one Prophecy of *Iſaiah*, and the manner how it is always alledged in the way of a moſt ſevere *Reproof* to the perſons to whom it is applied; it moſt manifeſtly appears, that there is never in Scripture any Intention to aſcribe to God any actual efficiency in the making men hard and wicked; but only a perpetual declaration of God's *juſt Judgments*, and of the *Wiſdom of his Providence*, manifeſted in the *Truth of the Prophecies*, and in the exact *Fitneſs* of the reſpective *Applications*. The moſt that is ever *literally* and *ſtrictly* aſcribed to God, is what Thoſe Expreſſions amount to, which I obſerve in the

Mat. iv. 12. Luke viii. 10.

4*th* and *Laſt* place, To be *Denunciations* or *Threatnings* of God's juſtly and in a judicial manner *leaving* incorrigible men to *themſelves*, after many repeated Provocations. Of This kind is That of *Ezekiel*, ch. xxiv. 13, *Becauſe I have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged; thou* ſhalt not *be purged from thy filthineſs any more.* And *Iſ.* xxix. 13, *Foraſmuch as this people has removed their Heart far from me;* ——*therefore*——*the Wiſdom of their Wiſe men ſhall periſh, and the Underſtanding of their prudent men ſhall be hid.* The *Heathen-world*, becauſe, departing from the Light of natural Conſcience, they *liked not to retain God in their Knowledge*; therefore God gave them up *unto vile Affections*, Rom. i. 24. The *Jews*, after long provocations, God gave up *unto their own hearts luſt*, Pſ. lxxxi. 12; *and* let *them follow their own imagination*; even ſo far as to *worſhip the Hoſt of Heaven*, Acts, vii. 42. And of *Chriſtians*, in the Times of great Corruptions of the Church, St. *Paul* prophecies, 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 11, that ſince they *loved not the Truth*, God *ſhould* ſend them ſtrong Deluſion, *that they might believe a Lye.* 'Tis a *ſevere*, but *very juſt*

SERM. LXVII.

juſt Threatning, which we read in *Ezek.* xiv. 3, 9: *Since theſe men have ſet up their Idols in their Heart, — if the Prophet be deceived when he hath ſpoken a thing,* I the Lord *have deceived That Prophet, — and they ſhall bear the Puniſhment of their iniquity.* Of the *fulfilling* which Threatning we have a remarkable inſtance in the Caſe of Idolatrous *Ahab*: Concerning whom, the Scripture in a *figurative* indeed, but very *emphatical and expreſſive* manner, [illegible] Viſion beholding *the Lord ſitting upon his Throne,* and *all the Host of Heaven ſtanding [illegible] him,* and the Lord *giving Leave* to an Evil Spirit to *deceive* the Prophets of *Ahab*. Yet even *here* 'tis very obſervable, that, as a Laſt Warning to *Ahab*, if it had been *poſſible* to bring him to Repentance; *this very thing*, even the deceiving *of his Prophets*, was itſelf told him beforehand by *Micaiah*. But he was under the ſtrong Prejudice of an idolatrous Mind, and therefore he *had not Ears to hear*. More than This, God was not *obliged*, nor was it *fit*, to Do for him. Nor will God to *Any man*, after he has uſed all *reaſonable* Motives, add *irreſiſtible* Means, to convert him whether he will or no. When the *Jews*, after our Saviour had worked *Many* Miracles, ſtill called for a *Sign from Heaven*; he told them, there ſhould *no Sign* be given to an *adulterous and perverſe generation*. And *after his Reſurrection*, he ſhowed himſelf alive, not to *all the people*, but to *choſen* and ſufficient *Witneſſes*. And when his unbelieving Countrymen, perverſely, and not with any real Deſire of being ſatisfied, urged him to *repeat* the ſame Miracles among *Them*, as he had already worked in *other* places; he made them this ſharp Reply, (the Senſe whereof is a Paraphraſe on the words of my Text, and wherewith I ſhall conclude;) *Luke* iv. 25, *I tell you of a Truth, many Widows were in Iſrael in the days of Elias, — but unto none of them was Elias ſent, ſave unto Sarepta a City of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many Lepers were in Iſrael in the time of Eliſeus the Prophet; and none of them was cleanſed ſaving Naaman the Syrian.* The Manifeſtations God was pleaſed to make of Himſelf, were abundantly ſufficient; and they that had *Ears* to hear, could not fail of underſtanding them. The caſe is the ſame *Now*, and in *All* Ages: God has made abundant Manifeſtations of Himſelf, both by *Reaſon* and *Revelation*; and no man can excuſably be ignorant of Him.

SERMON LXVIII.

Of the Nature of true Chriſtian Zeal.

REV. iii. 15, 16.

I know thy Works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my Mouth.

SERM. LXVIII.

RELIGION is the Great Ornament and Glory of Human Nature; that which principally diſtinguiſhes *Men* from the inferiour Orders of Creatures; and upon which Alone are grounded all Hopes of Life and Happineſs hereafter, when this ſhort and tranſitory World ſhall be paſſed away. In a matter of ſo great importance therefore, 'tis very wonderful, that any man who calls himſelf a reaſonable Creature ſhould be careleſs and indifferent; careleſs whether he has *Any* Religion, or *None*; indifferent whether his religion, when he *does profeſs* any, be *True* or *Falſe*; careleſs, when he *has* embraced the *True* Religion, whether he makes Any Improvement in his *Practice* anſwerable to it, or no. The Words of the Text are a Reproof ſent by our Saviour to the Church

Church of *Laodicea*, upon account of their remiſneſs and lukewarmneſs in this *laſt particular*. The Church of *Laodicea*, ſignifies either *literally* one of the Seven primitive Churches of *Aſia*, or *figuratively* one of the ſeven ſucceſſive States or Conditions of the Primitive Church Catholick, before its falling into That Univerſal Antichriſtian corruption deſcribed in the following chapters of this Book. In whichſoever of theſe two ſenſes we underſtand the Church of *Laodicea* to be meant, yet ſtill, it being part of the *Primitive Church* before the times of That Great and Total Apoſtacy; 'tis plain the lukewarmneſs here charged upon them, cannot ſignify a *general* careleſneſs whether they had *Any* Religion or *None*; nor an indifferency whether the Religion they profeſſed was *True* or *Falſe*; (for Theſe are the Crimes of *later* Ages, not of the *Primitive* days:) But *Their* lukewarmneſs was a remiſneſs or neglect of making improvement in *Practice*; anſwerable to the excellency of the Religion they profeſſed. *I know thy* Works, *that thou art neither cold nor hot*. The Defect was in their *Works*, or *Practice*: They would not lay aſide the *Profeſſion* of Religion, and yet they would not live anſwerable to it by being *zealous of good works*. This is what our Saviour reproves them for in the Text: and to add Weight and Dignity to the Reproof, 'tis introduced with a Solemn deſcription of the Greatneſs and Excellency of the Perſon who ſent it: *Unto the Angel* (ſays he) *of the Church of the Laodiceans, write; Theſe things ſaith the Amen, the faithful and True Witneſs, the Beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot: I would thou wert cold, or hot: So then, becauſe thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my Mouth: Becauſe thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with goods; and have need of nothing*; They proſpered (it ſeems,) in all worldly appearance, and had much Form of religion; but *knoweſt not that thou art wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked*: *Naked*, that is, deſtitute of the works of righteouſneſs; and *Blind*, that is, inſenſible of the dangerouſneſs of their condition. The words therefore are a Reproof to the *Laodiceans* for their *Want of* Zeal; and an intimation *wherein* the nature of *True Zeal* conſiſts. *Thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot*, is the Reproof for *want of Zeal*; And, *I know thy* Works, *that — thou art blind and naked*, is an intimation *What* was the *Zeal* they wanted. Now ſince *Theſe* things are *Our* Examples; and the Scriptures are written for *Our* Admonition, *upon whom the Ends of the World are come*; and the Faults of which the *Primitive* Church was guilty, are much more increaſed in the *Ages of Apoſtacy*: It cannot but be very proper for us, from the conſideration of theſe affectionate words of our Saviour, to inquire, for our Own inſtruction, into the nature of True *Zeal*, which the *Laodiceans* are here reproved for wanting; and alſo of That Falſe *Zeal*, which is apt to make Chriſtians think themſelves to be *rich* (in the ſpiritual ſenſe,) and to *have need of nothing*, when indeed they are moſt *wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.

SERM. LXVIII.

True *Zeal* then, which is the *Virtue* of a *Chriſtian*, may be diſtinguiſhed from Falſe *Zeal*, which is the Character of private *Parties* or *Factions*; principally by *Three* ways: By the *Object*, about which it is employed; by the *Manner and Circumſtances*, in which it expreſſes itſelf; and by the *End* to which it is directed.

I. The *Firſt* Mark, by which True *and* Chriſtian *Zeal* may be diſtinguiſhed from that which is Falſe *and* Unchriſtian is the *Object* about which it is employed. The Object of *True Chriſtian Zeal* is the *Study of* Truth, and the *Practice of* Right: The continued, impartial, unprejudiced *Inquiring* after Truth *ourſelves*; and the giving conſtant *encouragement* to *All Others* to ſearch for it after the ſame manner: The conforming conſtantly *our own Practice*, to the unqueſtionable eternal Rules of *Right and Equity*; and uſing continually all juſt, honourable, and Chriſtian means, to prevail with *Others* likewiſe to do the ſame. On the contrary: the Object of *Falſe and unchriſtian Zeal*, never is an *Impartial Inquiring What* and *Where* the *Truth* is; but always the *promoting* violently, *eſtabliſhing*, and *forcing men into* the Profeſſion of ſome *Imagined Truth*, without ever conſidering carefully whether it be *really a Truth* or no: And in like manner, the *inſiſting on the practice*, not of ſuch things as are unqueſtionable and undiſputed Acts of *Virtue* and *Righteouſneſs*; but of ſuch things principally as are the *diſtinguiſhing* practices, or practices built upon the *diſtinguiſhing* opinions, of particular Sects or Parties.

To explain this matter more particularly: The primary and proper Object of a *Chriſtian and good Zeal*, is the promoting the Practice of *Virtue and Righteouſneſs*.

But

SERM LXVIII.

But because *right Practice* can hardly be built, at least can never be built with any certainty and steddiness, but upon the Foundation of *Truth*: therefore the *Object* of Zeal *first* in the *Order* of Nature, is the *Knowledge of Truth*. And *Zeal* for searching after and discovering of *Truth* can *never* possibly be *excessive*. *The Price of Wisdom*, Job. xxviii. 18, *is above Rubies; The Topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure Gold. Buy the Truth*, (saith *Solomon*) *and sell it not; also Wisdom, and Instruction, and Understanding*, Prov. xxiii. 23. The like phrase is used by our Saviour in the words immediately following my Text; *I counsel thee to* buy *of me gold tried in the Fire*, (that is, to inquire diligently after the *uncorrupted* Doctrines of the Gospel, which will *bear the Trial* of the most *impartial examination*; —— *and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see*, that is, lay aside blind prejudices and corrupt affections, which hinder men from discerning the Truth; And *search the Scriptures* with an unbiassed understanding, that in Them you may find the words of eternal Life. *This* Zeal therefore, Zeal for inquiring and searching after the *Truth*, Zeal to know perfectly the Will of God, can never possibly be faulty in *Excess*. All Faultiness upon This Head, is always and only on the *Defective* side: A want *of Zeal*, a Coldness and Luke-warmness, a Carelessness and Indifferency in men, whether the things they profess to believe, be *true* or *not*. They receive things ignorantly and negligently at all adventures; They take their Religion upon Trust, upon the Authority of common Repute; without being at all sollicitous to *understand* it, or to *know* whereof they affirm: As if it was nothing more than the Custom of the Country, or the Fashion of the place they live in. Hence, though the Doctrine of Christ is so plainly and clearly expressed in the Gospel, that *he who runs may read it*; and All Christians, at all Times and in all Places, have been baptized into the Profession of the Same Faith, and into an Obligation to obey the Same Commandments; yet for all this, what hath vulgarly been called *Christian Religion*, has been at different Times in the same Country, and is Now in different Countries at the same Time, as different from itself, as Light is from Darkness: *God having* (in great Justice) *sent men strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lye*, 2 Thess. ii. 11; that they should entertain innumerable and incredible absurdities; because they received not the Truth in the Love thereof, and according to the Simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. The *first*, therefore, and *original* cause of all corruptions in religion, is *Want of Zeal* for inquiring after *Truth*; a coldness or luke-warmness, a carelessness or indifferency in men, whether the things they profess to believe, be *true*, or *not*. But then *further*; if we have never so much *Zeal* for inquiring after the *Truth*, and never so much *Success* in That Inquiry; yet still even *This* is nothing without *virtuous Practice*: And therefore, as I before observed, the *Great*, the *Principal*, the *Proper Object* of *Zeal*, is the *Practice of Virtue and True Righteousness*. And *here* likewise, as well as in the case of Searching after Truth, there is no room for our *Zeal* to be *too Great*. Men may *mistake* the *Object*, and be *zealous* for something *else* instead of *Virtue*; or, when the Object is right, the *manner and circumstances* in which it expresses itself, may be very faulty: But the *degree* of the *Zeal itself*; the Zeal for *Virtue, Righteousness, and Equity*, can never possibly be *too Great*. *It is* good (saith St. *Paul*) *to be* zealously *affected always in a good matter*, Gal. iv. 18. And the *Zeal* of the *Corinthians* in their liberality to the Poor of other Churches, is by the same Apostle commended as highly exemplary. And in his Epistle to *Titus*, ch. ii. 14, he declares that Christ gave himself for us, and redeemed us to this very end, that we might be a people zealous *of good Works*. Our Lord himself, by a figure of Speech expressing a Zeal which cannot be excessive, *Blessed*, says he, *are they that* hunger and thirst *after righteousness*. And describing his Own Practice, *My* Meat, says he, *is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his Work*. And again, *Joh.* ii. 17, *The Zeal of thy House has* eaten me up. And when, in the words of the Text, he had severely rebuked the *Laodiceans*, for being *luke-warm and neither cold nor hot*; for making *profession* of his Religion, and yet being remiss and negligent to improve themselves in *virtuous practice*, answerable to the excellency of the Religion they professed; he adds immediately in the 19*th* verse, *Be* zealous *therefore, and repent*. This is the full Notion of *Christian and good Zeal*, with respect to the Object about which it is imployed: 'Tis a *Zeal* for the

2 Cor. ix. 2.

Knowledge

Knowledge of Truth, and for the *Practice of Right*; And This *Zeal*, if it be not faulty in *Other* Circumstances, the *Degree of it* can never be *excessive*; Men can never be *too zealous* for *inquiring* impartially into *Truth*, or for *doing* what is confessedly and unquestionably *Right*.

But what has been said upon *This* head, will be still further illustrated, by considering, on the *Other* hand, the nature of False *and unchristian Zeal*, with regard to the Object about which *That also* is employed. And the *Object* of *That*, as I observed at the Beginning, is always *Some Imagined Truth*, never carefully examined whether it be *really* such; Or else some *Form* or *Ceremony*, of no great moment to Religion and Virtue; Or perhaps some *distinguishing* Practice, or Practice founded upon some *distinguishing* Opinion, of some particular Sect or Party. To explain this, by *Instances*: St. *Paul* relates, that the *Corinthians* were *zealous*, some of them for *Paul*, some of them for *Apollos*, and some for *Cephas*; and This their *Zeal*, he tells them, was not *spiritual*, but *carnal*; that is to say, 'twas not for the *Religion* of *Christ*, but for *Parties among Men*. Again: *Some* (he tells us,) upon the foundation of Christ, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones, built *wood*, *hay* and *stubble*; materials which would not bear the Test of the Fire. The Meaning is; They were zealous for *opinions*, of which they had never carefully examined the Truth; for *Doctrines*, which had no useful Influence upon Practice; for *Forms and Ceremonies*, which made men not at all the more careful to lead a virtuous Life. And of this sort of things it is, that our Saviour speaks, in the words following my Text, ver. 17, *Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Again: We read, 2 *Sam.* xxi. 2, concerning the *Gibeonites*, to whom *Joshua* and all *Israel had solemnly sworn* they should not be destroyed, that yet *Saul* long after *sought to slay them, in his Zeal to the children of* Israel and Judah. The *Object* of his Zeal was *False*, as well as the *Manner* of it *Cruel*: It was a Zeal for the *Power and Interest* (as *He* fansied) of the *children of* Israel and Judah, in opposition to the *Reason of the Thing*, and to the *Oath of God*. To mention but one Instance more: The whole Body of the Jewish Nation in our Saviour's days, were extremely *zealous* for the Observation of the Law: But 'twas a *Zeal*, *without Knowledge*; 'twas a *Zeal* without careful *Examination*; 'twas a *Zeal* for the *ceremonial* part of the Law, more than for the *moral*; 'twas a *Zeal* for the *Traditions of the Elders*, and for the *Doctrines* each of their *own particular Sect*, more than for the *Law* of God: And the Zeal which they had even for the *Law itself*, was without considering, that the very *End and Design* of the *Law* was to lead men to the *Gospel*; that it was *itself*, in its own nature, but a *Type* of Christ; and that God by the *Prophets* had all along clearly enough intimated, that there was to be such a *Change* in the *Dispensation*. For want of considering these things carefully and impartially, even those Jews who were *converted*, continued still, generally speaking, *all zealous of the Law*, Acts xxi. 20: And were *very earnest* to *enforce* the observation of it upon other Christians: Concerning whom St. *Paul* thus speaks, *Gal.* iv. 17, *They zealously affect you, but not well.* And Those of them who *were* not *converted*, were infinitely zealous, in their opposing the Gospel: *I bear them record*, says St. *Paul*, *Rom.* x. 2, *that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; For they being ignorant of God's righteousness*, (of That Method of Salvation which *God* has appointed,) *and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; For* Christ (saith he) *is the End of the Law.* Of these, St. *Paul* himself, before his conversion, was *One*. *According to the perfect manner of the Law of the Fathers, I was* zealous (says he) *towards God, as ye all are this day*, Acts xxii. 3; *being more exceedingly* zealous *of the traditions of my Fathers*, Gal. i. 14; *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless; concerning zeal, persecuting the church*, Phil. iii. 6; because *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus*, Acts xxvi. 9. For when the *Object* of Zeal, is not the *Searching after Truth* and the *Practice of Moral Virtue*, but the inconsiderately *and rashly promoting, violently and by* all means, some *unexamined or imagined Truth*; it often comes to pass that even *Zeal itself* for *Truth*, degenerates into the most *inveterate Prejudice*, and most *incurable Obstinacy* against *it*, and puts men upon the most *unrighteous Methods*, of *propagating* (as they think, but indeed

Rom. ix. 31, 32.

SERM. LXVIII.

of *oppoſing*) it. *They ſhall put you out of the Synagogues*, ſaith our Saviour, *Joh.* xvi. 2; *yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth God ſervice.* The *Reaſon* follows, *ver.* 3; *Theſe things will they do unto you*, becauſe *they have not known the Father, nor Me*; that is, becauſe they have no true Notion, either of *Natural* Religion, or of *Chriſtian*. The *Malignity* of this ſort of *Prejudice* is ſet forth to us under a moſt lively and expreſſive figure, *Act* vii. 57, *They* ſtopped their Ears, *and ran upon Stephen, - and ſtoned him.* They took effectual care, not to be convinced by what he ſhould ſay. *They were*, as the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſes it, *like the deaf adder that ſtoppeth her Ears; which refuſeth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely.* Our Saviour deſcribes the *unreaſonable Prejudices* of the *Phariſees*, by the ſame figure of ſpeech, *Joh.* viii. 43; *Why do ye not underſtand my Speech? even becauſe ye cannot hear my word.* His Meaning is; Their vitious and corrupt inclinations, would not ſuffer them to hearken to the Truth. And elſewhere in the ſame Goſpel, he more than once expreſſes the ſame thing again, by ſtiling them *Blind*. But

2*dly*; The *next* mark, by which True *and* Chriſtian *Zeal* may be diſtinguiſhed from that which is Falſe *and* Unchriſtian, is the Manner and Circumſtances in which it expreſſes itſelf. 'Tis manifeſt that *Zeal* cannot be at all a *Chriſtian Virtue*, except it be imployed about its true and proper *Object*, the *Search after Truth* and the *Practice of Right*. But This *alone* is not ſufficient. For, be its *Object* never ſo good, ſo that the Zeal cannot poſſibly be exceſſive in its *Degree*; yet ſtill by the *Manner and Circumſtances* in which it expreſſes itſelf, it may eaſily, if great Care be not taken, degenerate into a Falſe *and* Unchriſtian *Zeal*. *Wrath and Fierceneſs, Contentiouſneſs and Animoſity, Violence and Hatred*, are *vitious* and *ungodly* Practices, whether the *Object* of a man's zeal be *good* or *bad*. St. *Paul* was not only faulty for perſecuting the *Chriſtians*, when Himſelf was a *Jew*; but he would alſo ſtill have continued to have been equally faulty, if he had perſecuted the *Jews*, when Himſelf was a *Chriſtian*. The character of the *great Author* of our Religion is This, *Matt.* xii. 18, *Behold,—my beloved, in whom my Soul is well pleaſed, I will put my Spirit upon him, and he ſhall ſhow judgment unto the Gentiles; He ſhall not ſtrive, nor cry, neither ſhall any man hear his voice in the ſtreets; A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoaking flax ſhall he not quench, till he ſend forth judgment unto victory.* And when ſome of his own diſciples, beginning to depart from this example, would have called for Fire from Heaven upon the *Samaritans*, he rebuked them, ſaying, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of.* According to this Great Pattern, St. *Paul* directs, 2 *Tim.* ii. 24, that *the Servant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves.* And he adviſes All Chriſtians, to *let their Moderation be known unto all men:* Their *Moderation*; that is, *not* a luke-warmneſs or indifferency in *religion*, an indifferency in the great and *weightier matters of the Law*, (which is the *luke-warmneſs* reproved in the Text, and which is very conſiſtent with men's being *infinitely zealous* about *Trifles*;) but, by *Moderation*, St. *Paul* means *That Meekneſs, Calmneſs*, and *Equitableneſs* of Spirit, which very well agrees with, and indeed uſually accompanies, the *higheſt poſſible Zeal* for *Truth and Virtue*. The Want of *This Spirit* it was, that the ſame Apoſtle complains of in the *Corinthians*, in the following manner; *Whereas there is among you envying and ſtrife and diviſions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* His Meaning is, do ye not act like men who are more concerned for *your own private parties* and *paſſions*, than for the *religion* of *Chriſt? Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as Kings without us*; that is, ye are puffed up, and grown inſolent and domineering, in your ſeveral Parties and Diviſions, one againſt another. The manner of expreſſion, is exactly like That in the Text; where our Saviour, having rebuked the Church of *Laodicea* for being *luke-warm* and *careleſs* as to the *Works* or Fruits of true religion, immediately adds, Yet *thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

Phil. iv. 5.

1 Cor. iii. 3.

1 Cor. iv. 8.

But to proceed: How right ſoever the *Object* of our Zeal be, yet if That Zeal be accompanied with the *Wrath of man*, the nature of it (St. *James* tells us) is entirely altered, and it *worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*. For *Wars and Fightings*, Jam. iv. 1. (that is *Hatred, Animoſities, Contentiouſneſs*, and *Deſire of Rule* over

Jam. i. 20.

each

each other,) can proceed from nothing but from *your Lusts*, that is, from worldly passions, not from Zeal for true Religion. And whosoever takes pleasure in injuring his *Brother*, 'tis absurd and ridiculous (St. *John* assures us) for such a one to pretend he does it out of Zeal towards *God*: *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a liar*, 1 Joh. iv. 20. SERM. LXVIII.

3*dly* and *Lastly*. The *Last* particular, by which a *religious Zeal* is distinguished from a *human passion*, and by which it becomes truly and properly a *Christian virtue*, is the End or Intention towards which it is directed. A *Zeal* for inquiring after *Truth* may possibly be nothing but *Curiosity*; and a Zeal even for *doing what is right*, may possibly sometimes proceed merely from *Temporal Views*. In which cases, possibly indeed it may be an *useful and commendable Passion*; provided the *Manner and Circumstances*, in which it expresses itself, be not faulty. But nothing makes it properly a *Christian virtue*, but when, *together with* all the forementioned *requisites*, the End also or Intention, to which it is ultimately directed, is the *Honour and Glory of God*. By the *Honour and Glory of God*, always taking care that we mean not any thing *imaginary and enthusiastick*, which often turns *religious zeal* into some of the *worst* and most *pernicious* of all *vices*; but that thereby be constantly meant the *establishment of God's Kingdom of* righteousness *here*, in Truth and Peace and Charity; in order to the *salvation of men's souls hereafter in his eternal Kingdom of* Glory. I conclude therefore with the words of the wise Son of *Sirach*, Eccluſ. vii. 36. *Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the* End, *and thou shalt never do amiss*.

SERMON

SERMON LXIX.

The miraculous Birth of CHRIST.

[*Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.*]

MATT. i. 22, 23.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken of the Lord by the Prophet, ſaying; Behold, a Virgin ſhall be with Child, and ſhall bring forth a Son, and they ſhall call his Name Emmanuel, *which being interpreted, is God with Us.*

SERM. LXIX.

IT is a very *uſual Method* with *Unbelievers*; — And yet here, before I proceed, it may be proper and neceſſary to premiſe, that by *Unbelievers* I would at This Time be underſtood to mean, *not*, men of ſuch a diſpoſition as St. *Thomas* was before his Converſion; rational and inquiſitive perſons, Lovers of Truth and Virtue, men deſirous to know and to obey the Will of God, and careful to keep a Conſcience void of Offence both towards God and towards Men; yet, at the ſame time, ſenſible of the Difficulties

ties wherewith the Divine Providence has thought fit to permit even very important Truths to be sometimes attended; and careful, for That Reason, not to be imposed upon, nor to receive things without good Evidence, either of Reason, or of Revelation: These, I say, are *not* the *Unbelievers* I would at present be understood to have in View. For concerning such persons as these, our Saviour seems to speak, when he says, they are *not far from the Kingdom of God.* Mark xii. 34. But there is *another* sort of *Unbelievers*, who, having no right sense of the Liberty of Human Actions, of the natural, and essential Difference of Good and Evil, of the Moral Government of God over the World, of a Judgment to come, and of a Future State of Rewards and Punishments; do therefore seek all possible opportunities, not of enquiring into, and impartially examining, but of *cavilling* against the Authority of Christ and the Truth of his Religion, as being the great Support and Confirmation of these Doctrines of Nature, with the Belief of which all Notions of Fatality or Necessity, and all Licentiousness either of Sceptical Opinions or of Vicious Practice, is altogether inconsistent.

Now of *This* sort of *Unbelievers*, I say, the *usual Method* is to attack some particular uncertain Doctrines in the *Systems* of disagreeing Sects of Christians, and then conclude that they have destroyed *Christianity* itself: Or they set themselves to expose particular *Weak* Writers; and then leave it to be supposed, that *All* Defenders of the Doctrine of Christ are *Fools*: Or they pick perhaps out of *Better* Writers *some* inconclusive Reasonings, and *weak* Arguments; trusting it will thence be inferred, that there is *no Strength* in the *Strongest*: Or they represent Christianity as *relying* upon some *Foundation*, upon which it *does not rely*; and then conclude that it has *no Foundation* at all: Or they demonstrate some *Facts* to be *no Proofs* of the *Truth* of the Gospel, which *never* were *intended* for Proofs; and then infer, that there is *no Proof* of it at all: Or they dress up particular Facts or Doctrines, in *ridiculous Circumstances*; and then represent the *Things* themselves, as Objects of *Ridicule*: Or they lay *great Stress* upon some very *obscure*, or more *difficult Prophecy*: and thence infer, that *no Stress* is to be laid upon *Any*: Or because, in the nature of the Thing, almost *Any single* Prophecy may possibly be *imagined* applicable, in some sense or other, to Some *Other* person; therefore *all of them together*, centring uniformly in *Christ* and in *Him alone*, yet are not rightly *in Fact* applied to *Him*.

The words of *my Text* are a particular and very remarkable *Instance* of Some of the Cases in the foregoing Observation. It has been supposed by Many, that this *singular* and *miraculous* Fact, of the *manner* of our Lord's *Birth*, recorded thus in the *Beginning* and *first Entrance* of the Gospel-History, both by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*; and urged moreover by St. *Matthew* as an unquestionable Verification of an Antient and (at first Sight) as remarkable a Prophecy, as any is to be found in the whole *Old Testament*: It has been supposed (I say) by Many, that *This Miraculous Fact*, thus circumstantiated, and thus ushering-in the whole following History of the Gospel, must needs have been intended by the Evangelist, as a primary and fundamental Part of the *Proof* of our Lord's divine Commission. Which since in reality it *could not possibly* be; as being a Fact which, in the nature of things, could not *itself* be proved, till the Truth of Christ's Mission and the Veracity of his Followers had *first* been clearly established: Hence they have endeavoured to destroy the Authority of the Sacred Writer, as insisting (at the very Beginning of his History) upon a *Proof* which could not possibly be of any Use towards the Conviction of Unbelievers; and as confirming it by a *Prophecy*, which they think cannot be shown to be rightly applied, since the Words may be capable of another Interpretation.

For the removing therefore of This Prejudice, and to clear more fully the Meaning and Intent of my Text, I shall endeavour distinctly to make out the *three* following Particulars.

SERM. LXIX.

1. That this History of our Lord's *miraculous Birth*, evidently in fact *was not*, and in the nature of Things *could not possibly* be, intended by the Evangelist in this place, as any *Proof*, for the Conviction of Unbelievers, either of the Dignity of Christ's Person, or of the Truth of his Doctrine, or of the Reality of his Divine Commission.

2. That yet nevertheless, in the Nature of the Thing, when a Person of such Dignity as our Lord professed himself to be, and with such a Divine Commission, was to come into the World; this one particular Distinction, the *miraculous* manner of his *Birth*, was in itself a very *reasonable*, *proper*, and *not incredible* Circumstance.

3. That consequently the Sacred Writer of the *Life* of our Saviour, had *just reason*, when assured of the Truth of the Fact from things which *followed*, to insert this miraculous Circumstance into the *Beginning* of his *History*; and, in That Manner, and to That Purpose for which he relates it, had a *just Right*, and *good and sufficient Grounds*, to *apply the Prophecy* here cited, as a Prediction of it.

1. I say, This History of our Lord's *miraculous Birth*, evidently in fact *was not*, and in the Nature of Things *could not possibly* be, intended by the Evangelist in this place, as any *Proof*, for the conviction of Unbelievers, either of the Dignity of Christ's Person, or of the Truth of his Doctrine, or of the Reality of his Divine Commission. That it *could not possibly* be alledged in way of *Proof* of any of these things to Unbelievers, is most evident for This Plain Reason; because in the Nature of Things the Fact was *itself* incapable of being proved, till the Truth of Christ's Mission and the Veracity of his Followers had *first* been established. And that *in fact* it was *never* by the Evangelist *intended* as such, appears no less evidently from hence; that though both by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* it be laid down as the *Beginning and Foundation* of their Account of the *Life* of Christ, yet in the Account they give us of his *Preaching*, it is never once mentioned by Either of These very Evangelists, or by Either of the Two Other Evangelists, as ever alledged by *Christ* in proof of his being the true Messiah. Nor in the Book of the *Acts*, is it ever mentioned as urged by the *Apostles*, in *Their Preaching* at any time either to *Jews* or *Gentiles*. Nor in any of the *Epistles* of *Paul*, or of any *other* of the Apostles, is it ever referred to under That View. It would have been *absurd* to alledge, in preaching to Unbelievers, a Fact which *itself presupposed* the Truth of Christ's Mission; and which could not have been proved, without first taking for granted the Truth of That very Doctrine, in Proof of which This Fact was to have been alledged. But the *Beginning* of the *History* of the *Life* of Christ, is a very different thing from the *History* of his *beginning* to *Preach* the Gospel. What happened *First* in *Time*, could not but of necessity be *Last* in *Proof*: The *Credibility* of the *Invisible* Miracle of his *Birth*, depending entirely on the *Visible* miraculous Proofs, by which our Lord afterwards gave Evidence of *his* own Commission, and by which his Apostles ascertained *Their own* Veracity, and the *Truth* of the Accounts they gave concerning *Him*.

2. Though it could not indeed be alledged properly, in *Proof* of the Truth of his Doctrine to Unbelievers; yet nevertheless, in the *nature of the Thing*, when a Person of such Dignity as our Lord professed himself to be, and with such a Divine Commission, was to come into the World; this one particular Distinction, the *miraculous* manner of his *Birth*, was *in itself* a very *reasonable*, *proper*, and *not incredible* Circumstance. We are taught in Scripture, that as *the first man* and his Posterity, *were of the Earth, Earthy*; *the second man was the Lord from Heaven*. And our Lord himself frequently declared to his Disciples, that he *came down from Heaven*; that he *came forth from the Father, and came into the World*. The Meaning of these Expressions is explained to us in Other places; where it is declared that he *was in the Beginning*. *The Word of God*, the *original* Revealer of the Will of the Almighty to his Creatures, long before he *was made Flesh and dwelt among*

1 Cor. xv. 47.

Joh. iii. 13. xvi. 28.

SERM. LXIX.

mong Us, even from the Creation of the World: Having been (as St. *Paul* expresses it) *in the Form of God*, that is, in the Prophetick Language, the *Angel* or *Messenger of the Covenant*, before he *took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men, and found in fashion as a Man*; Phil. ii. 8. Now This being the Case; The most *obvious* manner in which it might *naturally* be *expected* that so extraordinary a Person, a Person of such Dignity as to have had *glory with God before the World was*; I say, the manner in which it was most *natural* to have *expected* that such a Person should come into the World, was in a way *different* from *the Sons of Men*. It was the Appointment of Divine Wisdom, for *Reasons of Government* in the infinite and eternal Kingdom of God over the Universe, that his Mercy and Compassion towards Penitent Sinners should be dispensed in a particular Method through the Atonement made by the Blood of Christ. In order to make This Atonement, and to become capable of Suffering as a Sacrifice by the shedding of his Blood, it was necessary for the Son of God to have *a Body prepared for him*; Heb. x. 5; and to be *born* after the *Likeness of Men*: Ch. ii. 14; *Forasmuch as the children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through Death he might destroy him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil.* Yet, being *such* a Person as the Scripture describes him, sent down immediately *from Heaven*; his *Birth* could not *naturally*, if I may so speak, but be, *miraculous*, as the Text represents it. And *miraculous* as it was, it was yet really, in the *nature of the Thing*, nothing *more miraculous*, excepting only that God has not thought fit to do the like *continually*; it was *in itself*, I say, not at all *more miraculous*, than what we vulgarly call (without *Any Meaning* or *Signification* in that Phrase,) *the Course of Nature*; that is, the Course of a *mere empty Word*, or *abstract Notion*, which has no *Being* or Reality of *Existence*, and consequently cannot be the efficient *Cause* of any thing.

Phil. ii. 6. Mal. iii. 1. Joh. xvii. 5.

3. This *miraculous Birth* of Christ, the Evangelist had *just reason*, when assured of the Truth of the Fact from things which *followed*, to insert at the *Beginning* of his *History* of our Saviour's *Life*; and, in That Manner, and to That Purpose for which he relates it, had a *just Right*, and *good and sufficient Grounds*, to *apply* the *Prophecy* here cited, as a Prediction of it.

When our Lord first told his Disciples that he *came down from Heaven*, that *he came forth from the Father, and came into the World*; they did not clearly understand his Meaning; nor probably did the *Blessed Virgin* herself comprehend the *Reason* of That miraculous Work which God worked in *Her*. But, as St. *Luke* tells us, *Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her Heart*; ch. ii. 19: And so did his Disciples, both with regard to *This*, and to *Many Other* things that Jesus did and said; Which at first they *understood not, and were afraid to ask him*. But *when Jesus was glorified*; Joh. xii. 16, and *Luke* xxxiv. 8; *then remembered they* and understood many things that *were written of him*, and done and spoken by him. Again; *Joh.* ii. 22; *When Jesus was risen from the Dead*, then *his Disciples remembered that he had said* these things *unto them*: *And they believed the Scripture, and the Word, which Jesus had said.* When our Lord, by his *Resurrection from the Dead*, had *confirmed* to his Disciples all the *Miracles* which he had worked, and all the Doctrines which he had taught in his *Life-time*; and particularly, before his *Ascension* into Heaven, had explained to them the manner of his *Descent* from thence; which, among other things, *insured* them of the *Truth*, and *unfolded* to them the *Reason* of the *Miraculousness* of his *Birth*: Then had they just grounds to *declare* the *Dignity* of his *Person*, and to expect that *Credit* should be given by *Believers* to the Accounts they had received of this miraculous *Nativity*; though it was what, in the Nature of the Thing, could never properly be alledged in their Preaching, among the Proofs they were to urge for the Conviction of Infidels.

Joh. iii. 13. xvi. 28. Mar. ix. 32. Luke ii. 50. ix. 45. xviii. 34. Joh. viii. 27. xx. 6.

Further:

SERM. LXIX.

Further: When our Lord, after his Reſurrection, *beginning at Moſes and all the Prophets*, had *expounded unto* his Apoſtles *in all the Scriptures the things concerning himſelf*, and *opened their Underſtanding, that they might underſtand the Scriptures*; Luke xxiv. 27, 45; Then they ſaw plainly, (and any one *Now*, who will trace the whole Thread of the Old Teſtament, may plainly ſee) that there is a continued Series and Connexion, one uniform Analogy and Deſign, carried on for many Ages by Divine Preſcience through a Succeſſion of Prophecies; which, as in their proper *Centre*, do *All* meet together in *Chriſt*, and in *Him only*; however the *ſingle lines*, when conſidered *apart*, may many of them be imagined to have another Direction, and point to intermediate Events. Nothing is more *evident*, than that the *Whole Succeſſion* of *Prophecies*, can poſſibly be applied to *None* but *Chriſt*. Nothing is more *miraculous*, than that they ſhould all of them be *capable* of being poſſibly applied to *Him*. And whatever *intermediate* Deliverances or Deliverers of God's People, may *ſeemingly* or *really* be ſpoken of upon *particular* Occaſions; nothing is more *reaſonable* than to believe; (in the *Apoſtles* certainly, who converſed perſonally with our Lord after his Reſurrection, nothing could be more *reaſonable* than to believe,) that the *Ultimate* and *General* View of the *Prophetick Spirit* Always was fixed on *Him*, of whom in *Some* of the Antient Prophecies it is *expreſly* affirmed, that God's *Servant David ſhall be the Prince* over his People *for ever*; that *his Dominion* ſhall be *an everlaſting Dominion, which ſhall not paſs away*; *and his Kingdom, that which ſhall not be deſtroyed*. The Apoſtle St. *Matthew* therefore had a *juſt Right*, and *good and ſufficient Grounds*, to *apply* to our Lord the *Prophecy* cited by him in my Text. Nor is it of any moment, to what perſon *Ahaz* perhaps might think it confined; or in what ſenſe even *Iſaiah* himſelf, poſſibly, might underſtand the words. For the Prophets themſelves *ſaw* Theſe things, but *as through a Glaſs, darkly*; even as the *Apoſtles* afterwards did, and *We* ſtill do, things that are yet future. For which reaſon, *no Prophecy of the Scripture is* (as St. *Peter* tells us) *of any private Interpretation*; that is, it relates not to things within the Prophet's *own* [ἴδιας] *perſonal* Knowledge; *For the Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but Holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*. So that even the Prophets themſelves could do nothing more, but *enquire and ſearch diligently*; as the ſame *Apoſtle* expreſſes it: *Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Chriſt which was in them did ſignify, when it teſtified beforehand the Sufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that ſhould follow.* —— *Which things*, not only the Prophets, but even *the Angels* (ſays he) *deſire to look into*. All that was *poſſible*, and all that was *intended*, and all that was *needful* to be underſtood by Thoſe who lived in the Ages *before* our Saviour, was, that God deſigned by his Prophets to keep up in the world a perpetual Expectation and Reliance upon his Promiſes in general, that his True Worſhippers ſhould be ſure finally to meet with an *everlaſting Deliverance*; and a *Saviour*, of whoſe Kingdom there ſhould be *no End*. This is what *Abraham* ſaw *afar off*, and rejoiced and *was glad*. And This is what *All the Prophecies* in the Old Teſtament moſt evidently *end* in, whatever intermediate Events ſometimes they may occaſionally *begin* with. *That Prophecy* particularly, cited here by the Evangeliſt in my Text, has *at leaſt thus much* in it; what conſtruction *ſoever* be put upon the Words. Whatever can be *imagined* to have been in this Prediction promiſed perſonally to *Ahaz*, was fulfilled in its Seaſon: But that the words in the Text had *principally*, if not *ſolely*, a Reference to ſome far greater and more laſting Event; cannot (I think) be doubted by any rational perſon, who conſiders the Solemn *Apoſtrophe* from *Ahaz* to the *whole Houſe of Judah*, wherewith they are introduced: *Hear ye now, O Houſe of David*; —— *the Lord himſelf ſhall give you a Sign*, (that is, not a Sign to *That generation* then preſent; but to Them a *Promiſe* of what ſhould *finally* be a Sign or Evidence of God's everlaſting Care of his People,) *Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a Son, and ſhall call his Name Emmanuel*. And This is ſtill the more reaſonable to be ſo underſtood, if it

Ezek. xxxvii. 25.
Dan. vii. 14.
2 Pet. i. 20.
1 Pet. i. 10.
Iſ. vii. 13.

be

be compared with what the ſame Prophet ſays concerning the ſame perſon in a chapter nearly following: *Unto Us a Child is born, unto Us a Son is given, and the Government ſhall be upon his Shoulder:* — *Of the Increaſe of his Government and Peace there ſhall be no End,* —— *from henceforth even for ever.* SERM. LXIX. Iſ. ix. 6.

The Application of what has been ſaid, is; that We who are perſwaded of the Truth of Chriſt's *Miſſion*, and conſequently of his *Doctrine*, muſt endeavour to live ſuitably to That Holy Religion, of which We make Profeſſion: Always remembring, that the End and Deſign of the Goſpel is to *Teach us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World; looking for that bleſſed Hope, and the glorious appearance of the Great God, and of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* And particularly that at This time when we commemorate his Birth, we *keep the Feaſt, not with the Leaven of Malice and Wickedneſs*, or of Rioting and Debauchery; *but with the unleavened Bread of Sincerity*, Soberneſs, *and Truth.*

SERMON LXX.

The Prediction of the MESSIAH.

(*Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.*)

ISAIAH ix. 6.

Unto Us a Child is born, unto Us a Son is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and his Name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, The mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.

SERM. LXX.

GOD, the Supreme Governour and Lord of the Univerſe; who *worketh all things after the Council of his Will*; having appointed, in the unſearchable Wiſdom of his Government that the Method by which ſinful men ſhould be brought unto Salvation, ſhould be by his Son's Appearing and Suffering in the Fleſh; thought fit, from the Beginning of the World, to give men at firſt obſcure Notices, and afterwards by degrees clearer and clearer Predictions, of a Saviour who ſhould come in the fulneſs of Time, to be

be their Redeemer, Mediator, Interceſſor and Judge. In which whole Diſpenſation, as in all other Matters, when we affirm that God diſpoſes things *after the Counſel of his own Will*, we muſt always take care ſo to underſtand this, and other the like Expreſſions of Scripture, that it may ſignify, not what vain and preſumptuous *men* are apt to mean, when *They* talk of acting according to their *own Will and Pleaſure*, that is, arbitrarily and without reaſon; but the meaning of this ſort of expreſſions, when applied to *God*, who can never *pleaſe* to do any thing but what is beſt, is This only; that *his* mere Will and Pleaſure ought abundantly to ſatisfy us, that tho' *we* do not perhaps know in particular *what* all the reaſons are, yet *in reality* there always *are* in the *things themſelves* the greateſt and ſtrongeſt reaſons, upon account of which every thing that *He* does, is *in itſelf*, the beſt and fitteſt to be done. Having therefore in perfect Wiſdom, as Supreme Governour and Lord of all, determined to bring ſinful Man to Salvation by this particular Method; he opened his divine Intention at firſt obſcurely to *Adam*, by promiſing that *the Seed of the Woman ſhould bruiſe the Serpent's Head*: And afterwards a little further to *Abraham*, by ſhowing him that *in His ſeed ſhould all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed*: Then, with ſtill more diſtinct circumſtances, to *Moſes*; under the numerous types and ſhadows of the Law. And laſtly, more and more plainly and explicitly, as the Time drew nearer, by full and clear Predictions of many ſucceſſive *Prophets*. Under all which ſeveral Diſpenſations, they who obeyed the word of God, according to the manner in which it was Then reſpectively revealed to them, were each of them entitled to the Benefit of the whole Salvation; and notwithſtanding their different degrees of Knowledge, are all of them finally to be gathered together into One in Chriſt; ſo that He, to whom much is revealed, ſhall have nothing over; and He, to whom was revealed but little, ſhall have no lack; when, at the conſummation of all things, they ſhall all meet in one great and general Aſſembly of the firſt-born which are written in Heaven; Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apoſtles; and whoſoever have in all Ages, after the pattern of theſe great Examples, obeyed the Commandments of God as made known to them, whether by the Light of Nature, or by the Law of *Moſes*, or by the Goſpel of Chriſt.

Of all the Prophecies in the Old Teſtament, concerning this Method which the divine Wiſdom has appointed, of bringing men to Salvation; there is none that contains a clearer and more diſtinct, a fuller and more particular prediction, than the words now read unto you for the Subject of our preſent Meditations: *Unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given, and the Government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and his Name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, The mighty God, The everlaſting Father, The Prince of Peace.* In diſcourſing upon which words at This Time, the Method ſhall be, to conſider and explain diſtinctly the ſeveral particulars, whereof the Text conſiſts, in the Order they lie; and from each particular ſo explained, to infer in its place, as we go along, what may be uſefully and practically deduced therefrom.

Unto Us a Child is born: Theſe words, as they ſound in the *Engliſh*, may ſeem at firſt ſight to expreſs nothing more, than the natural Birth of ſome eminent perſon. But in the ſtrict ſenſe of the original, and according to the intention of the whole Prophecy, it is plain they muſt be ſo underſtood, as if they had been thus rendred; *Unto us is born* The *Child*, abſolutely and by way of eminence; That *Child*, whom *all* the Prophecies from the beginning of the World, in their final intention pointed at; whom *this* Prophecy of *Iſaiah*, thro' every part of it, deſcribes under different Characters; and whom the Text may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to refer to as *particularly before-mentioned*; ch. vii. 14. *The Lord himſelf ſhall give you a Sign; behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive and bear a* Son, *and ſhall call his Name Immanuel.* This Birth of Chriſt; as its being of a *Virgin*, was a mark of Dignity more than human; that He, who by the Will of his Father was the *Author* of Nature, might be diſtinguiſhed by being born not after the *Courſe* of Nature; ſo the *Birth*, *itſelf*, his *being born at all*, and coming into the World as *a Child*, was an evidence of the reality of his Incarnation. He was *found* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *in faſhion as a Man*, and was *made in the likeneſs of Men*: The meaning is; not in the likeneſs of our *nature*, in the *appearance* only, as oppoſed to the *reality*; but

he

SERM. LXX.

he was made after the likeneſs of *other* Men, by *really* partaking of our infirm *Nature*.

In order to *redeem* mankind after *that* Method which the Wiſdom of God had from the beginning appointed, it was neceſſary that Chriſt ſhould *ſuffer*; and in order to *That ſuffering*, it was neceſſary that he ſhould be *born* after the likeneſs of Men. *Foraſmuch as the children* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *are partakers of Fleſh and Blood, he alſo himſelf took part of the ſame, that through Death he might deſtroy him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil;* ——*Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren,* (tempted in all points like as we are, only without ſin; and capable of being touched with the feeling of our infirmities;) *that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Prieſt in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the Sins of the people; For in that He himſelf has ſuffered being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted*; Heb. ii. 14. And from hence the ſame Apoſtle in another place, though *There* indeed he ſpeaks *figuratively* concerning Chriſt's *myſtical* Body the Church, yet from *hence* it is that the *Ground* of his *manner of expreſſing himſelf* is taken; *We are members* (ſaith he) *of his Body, of his Fleſh and of his Bones.*

Heb. ii. 15.

The proper *Uſe* of this *firſt* Obſervation in the Text, the humiliation of Chriſt in his Birth, is what St. *Paul* infers from the ſame obſervation; *Phil.* ii. 5; *Let This mind*, the ſame *humble* mind, *be in You, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus; who tho' he was in the form of God*, inveſted with Divine Authority and Dominion, *yet was not greedy of appearing as God* (ſo the words are in the Original;) *but* ——*took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of Men*; and *glorified not* Himſelf *to be made an High-Prieſt*, but was glorified by *Him that begat him*; Heb. v. 5; and honoured not *Himſelf*, but was honoured by Him that ſent him; *Joh.* viii. 54.

It follows; *Unto Us a Son is given.* And theſe words alſo, like thoſe fore-going, muſt be underſtood abſolutely and by way of Eminence: *Unto us is given* The *Son*; That *Son of Man*, who was *ſo*, as *no other* ever was, the Son of *Man*; who was *ſo*, as *no other* ever can be, the Son of *God*: *That* divine Perſon, who was the Subject of all the Prophecies, from the foundation of the World, and the Expectation of all Nations. The original of the *former* character, his being the Son of *Man*, is that ſublime deſcription which the prophet *Daniel* gives of his Viſion; ch. vii. 13. *I ſaw in the Night-Viſions, and behold, one like* the Son of Man, *came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the antient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion and glory and a Kingdom.* From this prophetical deſcription it is, that our Saviour in the Goſpels is ſo conſtantly characterized by That Title of *the Son of Man*: Mat. xxiv. 30; *Then ſhall appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven*, (the Signal given you by the Prophet *Daniel*, the Signal of That *Son of Man* there deſcribed,) *and they ſhall ſee him coming in the clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory.* And *Joh.* iii. 13; *The Son of Man which is in Heaven.* And in the book of the *Revelation.* ch. i. 13; the very *words* of *Daniel* are tranſcribed; *one* like *unto the Son of Man*; and ch. xiv. 14. *Upon the cloud one ſat*, like *unto the Son of Man.* The *other* character of our Saviour, his being the Son of *God*, was given him *firſt* upon account of his being *born miraculouſly* of the Virgin by the immediate Power of God; *Luk.* i. 35; Then again, upon account of his being *raiſed from the dead* by the like miraculous Power of the Almighty; *Rom.* i. 4: *Acts* xiii. 33. And laſtly, upon account of his being revealed to be That divine Perſon, who, deriving his Being from the Father in a ſingular and incomprehenſible manner; and having been with the Father, from the Beginning; and having had Glory with Him, before the World was; and having originally exerciſed the Father's Power, in the Creation of the World; and having ſince in all ages appeared *in the form of God*, as the Word, the Meſſenger, the Repreſentative, the *Image, of the Inviſible God*; at length, in the Fulneſs of Time, was *made Fleſh* and *dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Luk. i. 32. Mar. v. 7.

Joh. i. 14.

Unto *Us*, ſays the Prophet in the Text, is this Son of God given: unto *Us*, as it was *Then* literally underſtood, the *poſterity of Abraham*, the Nation of the *Jews*; but, as it is *Now* diſtinctly revealed in the Goſpel, and as it was even *Then* obſcurely predicted, unto Us *Gentiles* alſo is he given; unto us that are *far off*, as well

well as to them that are *near*; unto us *Sinners*, of all Nations and of all Ages; even unto *all Mankind*, who are willing to repent, and reform their manners, and make acknowledgment of the Truth; For God *would have all men to be saved*, and wills *not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*: Nay even to *Them* therefore which never heard of him, must the Benefit of his Coming extend, according to the proportion of their Capacities unknown to us; For *the Mercy* of God is, without exception, *over all his works*.

To Us is This Son *given*. It is not without reason, that the word *given* is so carefully and constantly inserted, and so great an emphasis and stress laid upon it, in almost all the Texts of both the Old and New Testament, which mention the coming of Christ into the World. The intent of it is, to express to us distinctly the respective parts, which the Father and the Son bore in the redemption of the World; that neither the One, nor the Other, neither he that gave, nor he that was willing to be given for us, should be defrauded of their proper Honour. That God *gave* his Son, out of his bosom; is expressive to us of the *Father's Supreme Authority*, and of his original, essential, and eternal *Goodness*: That the Son gave *himself* for us, or was *willing* to be *given*, denotes the *Love* of *Christ* towards Mankind; and explains the *Justice* of his being appointed to suffer, tho' he was an *innocent* person; because *That* appointment, as it was by the Will of the Father, so it was also by his own free consent. The *first* of these, *viz.* the *Supreme* Authority of the *Father*, is set forth in those Texts of Scripture, where it is affirmed that *in the fulness of Time God* sent *forth his Son*, Gal. iv. 4; *that he saved us according to his* own *purpose and grace in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. viii. 9; even *according to the* purpose *of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own Will*; Eph. i. 11. And indeed in the Nature of things it is evident, that the Supreme Power *to* whom the satisfaction is to be made, must appoint *what* satisfaction he will be pleased to accept. The *Second* of these, *viz.* the *original* Goodness of the *Father*, is set forth in those Texts, where the Scripture teaches us, *that God so* loved *the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life*; Joh. iii. 16; and 1 Joh. iv. 9; *In this was manifested the* Love *of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him*; and ver. 10; *he* loved *us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our Sins*. The *third* particular, *viz.* the *Love* of *Christ* in being *willing* to be thus sent or given for us, is expressed in those Texts, wherein we are taught, that Christ *gave himself a ransom for all*; 1 Tim. ii. 6; that he gave himself *for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity*; Tit. ii. 14. And Both these together, (the Authority and Goodness of the *Father* in giving his Son, and the Love of *Christ* in being willing to be given for us,) are expressed in one, *Gal.* i. 4; *who gave* himself *for us, according to the Will of* God *and our Father*.

The *Uses* of *This particular*, are; 1*st*, that we acknowledge *primarily* the original essential *Goodness* and *Compassion* of *God our Father*, as the *first* Cause and Author of our Salvation; upon which account, St. *Paul* frequently stiles the Father, *God our Saviour*; and that therefore we look not upon him as a cruel and implacable Judge; but on the contrary extol with all thankfulness our *Redemption through* Christ, *to the praise of the glory of* His *Grace, who has made us accepted in the beloved*, and has given us *the Adoption of children by Jesus Christ to* himself, *according to the good pleasure of his* own *Will*; Eph. i. 5. 2*dly*, That in the next place we thankfully express our Gratitude also to our *Saviour himself*, who condescended for our sakes to become Man; who *loved us, and gave himself for us*; and *washed us from our Sins in his own blood, and has made us Kings and Priests to God and his Father*. 3*dly*, That from *This Great* Instance of the divine Grace and Goodness, we learn to depend upon the same Beneficence for all *other* good things likewise: For *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us* all things; *Rom.* viii. 32. Not, a Liberty to *sin*, that *Grace* may further abound; God forbid; but all *good* things, all things really profitable to our present and future Happiness. *Lastly*, that from this wonderful Love of *God* towards *Us*, we learn our *own* Obligation to love *one another*; 1 Joh. iv. 11; *Beloved, if God so loved Us, we ought also to love one another*.

Eph. v. 2. Rev. i. 5.

SERM. LXX.

And thus much concerning the firſt part of the Words, *Unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given.*

It follows; *And the Government ſhall be upon his Shoulder.* The *Jews*, though they acknowledged theſe words were to be applied to the *Meſſiah*, yet they underſtood them of the Dominion only of a *temporal* Prince, who ſhould ſubdue their enemies for them. But the opening of this Prophecy by degrees in further predictions, was ſuch as ought to have given *Them* better Notions of this matter; and the Account *We* have in the New Teſtament of the accompliſhment of all thoſe predictions has from *Us* removed all appearance of difficulty in the underſtanding them. The true meaning of the words, is begun to be opened in the very next verſe immediately following the Text, *Of the increaſe of his government and peace there ſhall be no end, upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it, and to eſtabliſh it with judgment and with juſtice from henceforth even for ever*; ver. 7. In the Prophecy of *Daniel*, it is explained a little further; ch. ii. 44; *The God of Heaven ſhall ſet up a Kingdom which ſhall never be deſtroyed,——and it ſhall ſtand for ever.* And ſtill more clearly; ch. vii. 13; *I ſaw in the night-viſions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Antient of days, and they brought him near before him; And there was given him dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all people, nations and languages ſhould ſerve him; his dominion is an everlaſting dominion, and his Kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed.* This was a ſufficiently plain intimation, that the Kingdom of the Meſſiah was not to be a worldly temporal Kingdom. The Application of theſe Prophecies to *Chriſt*, is made expreſsly by the Angel to the Bleſſed Virgin; *Luke* i. 32: *He ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the Son of the Higheſt,——and he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there ſhall be no end.* What *manner* of Dominion this was to be, our Saviour himſelf began *more clearly* to explain; Mat. xxviii. 18: *All Power is given to me in Heaven and Earth.* This diſcovered that it was to be a *ſpiritual* Kingdom, more *extenſive*, as well as more *laſting*, than Earthly Dominions. The Principal *Acts* of Power in this ſpiritual Kingdom, are expreſſed by St. *Peter*; *Acts* x. 42: *He is ordained of God to be Judge of Quick and Dead*; and *that through his Name whoſoever believeth in him ſhall receive remiſſion of Sins.* And the full *Extent* of this *whole Dominion* is ſet forth by St. *Paul*, in thoſe paſſages of his Epiſtles, where he tells us that Chriſt *ſitteth at the right hand of the Throne of God*, being *Head over all things*; *exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in This World, but alſo in that which is to come*; *Angels and Authorities and Powers being made ſubject unto him*, and *all things put under his feet.* To which deſcription, the Apoſtle yet thought it neceſſary to add the following caution; 1 Cor. xv. 24, 27; *But when he ſaith all things are put under him, it is manifeſt that he is accepted which did put all things under him*; *And (in the end) when all things ſhall be ſubdued unto him, then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto Him that put all things under Him (having delivered up the Kingdom to God even the Father,) that God* even the Father *may be all in all.* Which *delivering up of the Kingdom*, if any one asked *how* it is conſiſtent with thoſe forementioned prophecies of his *reigning forever*; the Anſwer is plain, That as of the *Saints*, under Chriſt their Head and Lord, it is affirmed, *Rev.* xxii. 5, that *they ſhall reign for ever and ever*; ſo of *Chriſt* in an infinitely higher ſenſe, even *after* his delivering up the Kingdom to the Father, it will ſtill be true, that of his Dominion *with* and *under* the Father, *there ſhall be no End.* And This is the full meaning of *That* Expreſſion, *The Government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder.*

Heb. xii. 2. Eph. i. 22. Col. ii. 10. Phil. ii. 11. Eph. i. 21. 1 Pet. iii. 22. 1 Cor. xv. 27. Eph. i. 22. Heb. ii. 8.

The remaining part of the Text, is a further Deſcription of the *Perſon*, upon *whoſe ſhoulder* it was propheſied *This Government ſhould be*; it is a further deſcription of his Perſon, under four diſtinct Names or Characters. The *Firſt* is; *And his Name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor.* The term, *Wonderful*, ſignifies, that the Perſon was to be of *Secret* and Greater *Dignity*, than the *Jews* expected: And ſo the word is of the ſame import, with that more antient intimation given to *Jacob*, when he wreſtled with him; *Gen.* xxxii. 29; *Wherefore is it that thou doſt ask after my Name?* and to *Manoah*; Judg. xiii. 18; *Why aſkeſt thou thus after my Name, ſeeing it is ſecret?* The other term, *Counſellor*, ſignifies the *Revealer of the Secret* Counſel *of God*; For ſo the Goſpel is frequently ſtiled in Scripture,

μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος.

Scripture, the whole *Counsel of God*; the *hidden wisdom*; the *mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his Saints*; the *mystery which was kept secret since the World began, but now is made manifest: and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for the obedience of Faith.* Upon *This account* it is, that Christ is called *The* Word *of God*, the Revealer of his Will, the *Angel* or *Messenger of his Covenant*, and, in the words of the Text, *Wonderful, Counsellor.*

SERM. LXX.

Acts xx. 27. 1 Cor. ii. 7. Eph. iii. 9, 10, 11. Col. i. 26. Rom. xvi. 25. John i. 1. Rev. xix. 13. Mal. iii. 1. Heb. i. 2. Acts x. 36. Rom. x. 12. xiv. 9. Rev. i. 5. xvii. 14. xix. 16. Heb. i. 8. John i. 1. 12, 28.

The *Second* Character is, He shall be called *The mighty God*, or *mighty Lord.* The meaning of which phrase, has been already in good measure explained under that foregoing character, *The Government shall be upon his shoulder*; And the compleat import of it is more fully expressed to us in those places of the New Testament, wherein Christ is stiled *Heir of all things*, *Lord* of *all* or over *all*, *Lord both of the Dead and Living*, *the Prince of the Kings of the Earth*, *the Lord of Lords and King of Kings*, and, in one word, (by the appointment of the Father, *our Judge*, *our Lord*, *and our God*: The Sum and Intent of all which Titles together, is accurately set forth by St. *Paul* in that most lively description; *Phil.* ii. 9; *God has given him a Name which is above every Name*; *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*, (every Creature should submit to *His* Authority,) *of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth*; *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The *Third* Character is, *He shall be called the everlasting Father.* Which Phrase, as it lies in our Translation, is very apt to be mistaken. For if thereby be understood, that the *Son* is the *Father*; this would be plainly *confounding the Persons* of the Father and the Son, and (by a manifest Absurdity) making *the Son* to be *the Father of Himself.* Which manner of speaking is so much the worse, because there were in the Primitive times certain False Teachers who did so speak, and whose Doctrine (being of worse consequence than at first sight appeared) was severely reproved by the Apostles. *He is an Antichrist*, saith St. *John*, *that denieth the Father and the Son*; 1 *Joh.* ii. 22. And *they shall bring in*, saith St. *Peter*, *damnable heresies*, *even denying the Lord that bought them*; 2 Pet. ii. 1; speaking of *those*, who in reality denied our Saviour to have any Being at all, by making the Son to be nothing else but merely another Name for the Father. The true rendering therefore of these words of the Prophet, is, not *the everlasting Father*, but the *Father* or *Lord of the future everlasting Age*, the *Age of the Gospel*; concerning which the Apostle declares; *Heb.* ii. 5; that to *Christ* only, and *not to Angels*, hath God *put in subjection* this *Age to come.*

Best Copies of LXX. Πατὴρ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. *Pater seculi futuri.* Vulg.

Lastly; The *Fourth* and *Last* Character here given to our Saviour, is, that He shall be called *The Prince of Peace.* The meaning of which Title, was first in some degree explained by the Angels to the Shepherds, when they sung that Hymn; *Luke* ii. 14; *Peace on* Earth, *good will towards* Men; which was well answered with That *Hosannah*, the Disciples sung to our Saviour; ch. xix. 38: *Peace in* Heaven, that is, reconciliation with *God.* More distinctly afterwards by St. *Peter*; *Acts* x. 36, 43; *God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of All*; (that is, establishing Peace and Unity between *Jews* and *Gentiles*, under *Jesus Christ* their Common *Lord*,) *that through his Name whosoever believeth in him, should receive remission of Sins.* Most fully and clearly of all, by St. *Paul*; Rom. v. 1: *Being justified by Faith, we have* Peace *with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*: and *Eph.* ii. 14; *He is our* Peace, *who hath made Both One*, that is, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*; and hath —— *reconciled Both unto God in one Body by the Cross, having* —— *preached* Peace *to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh*: and *Col.* 19; *It pleased the Father — by Him, (having made* Peace *through the Blood of his Cross) to reconcile all things unto himself*; —— *and you that were sometimes alienated, and Enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet Now hath he reconciled.* The *Uses* of this last particular are; *First*, Since *God* has graciously been pleased to send us this Word of reconciliation by the Prince of Peace, that therefore *We on our part* be also willing to be reconciled to *Him*, by forsaking those Sins which are the cause of his displeasure; *Now then*, saith St. *Paul*, *we are ambassadors for Christ*; *as though God did beseech you by us*; *we pray you in Christ's stead, by ye reconciled to God*; 2 Cor. v. 20. *Secondly*, Having so great an Intercessour

SERM. LXX.

Heb. iv. 16. Eph. iii. 12.

ceſſour for us, as the Prince of Peace Himſelf, the Son of the living God; that therefore we *come boldly unto the Throne of Grace*, having *acceſs with confidence through the Faith of him*; Heb. x. 19; *Having therefore, brethren, boldneſs to enter into the Holieſt by the blood of Jeſus, by a new and living way which he hath conſecrated for us; ---and having an High-Prieſt over the houſe of God; let us draw near with a true Heart, in full aſſurance of Faith.* *Thirdly*, That yet we be careful to conſider, that this place and reconciliation purchaſed for us by Chriſt, is only upon condition of our future obedience: For ſo the Apoſtle adds in the words next immediately following thoſe now cited; *let us draw near --- in full aſſurance of faith, having our Heart ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and our bodies waſhed with pure Water*; that is, having our minds cleanſed with that purification from wickedneſs, the Sign and Emblem of which is the Baptiſm of Water: And *Col.* i. 23; God hath now *reconciled* you to himſelf, ſaith St. *Paul*, if *ye continue in the faith, grounded and ſettled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Goſpel.* *Fourthly*, That having ſo great a *Mediator* as the Prince of Peace appointed us of *God*, we ſuffer no others to be joined with him by *human invention.* For as worſhipping any other *God*, beſides the *Father Almighty*, is Idolatry againſt *God:* So worſhipping any other *Mediator*, beſides his only *Son* our Lord, is Idolatry againſt *Chriſt*, or ſetting up *Idol-Mediators.* They who worſhip Saints and Angels, *beguile themſelves of their reward*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *not holding the Head*, which is *Chriſt*; *Col.* ii. 18. *Laſtly*, Upon this particular great occaſion of commemorating thankfully the *Birth* of the Prince of Peace, let us keep the Feaſt worthily and as becometh Chriſtians: *not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedneſs*, or of rioting and debauchery, but *with the unleavened bread of Sincerity*, Soberneſs *and Truth.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXI.

The Character of the MESSIAH.

[Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.]

GAL. iv. 4, 5.

But when the Fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law; To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.

SERM. LXXI.

THE principal Deſign of St. *Paul* in this Epiſtle, is to vindicate the truth and juſtice of God in aboliſhing the *Jewiſh* religion ſo far as concerned the *Gentile* Converts, and eſtabliſhing the *Chriſtian* alone in its room: againſt thoſe who contended that even the *Gentile* Diſciples were obliged to obſerve the law of *Moſes*, and that the Religion of Chriſt was to be added to That of *Moſes*, and not That of *Moſes* to be taken away by Chriſt. Amongſt many Arguments which the Apoſtle makes uſe of to confute theſe falſe Teachers, he begins this iv*th* chapter with the Similitude of a young Heir's being under Tutors and Governors; ver. 1 and 2; *Now I ſay, that the Heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a Servant, though he be lord of all; But is under Tutors and Governors, until the time appointed of the Father.* Which Similitude he applies in the 3*d* verſe, and in the words of the Text; *Even So We*, ſays he, *when we were children*, We of the *Jewiſh* diſpen-

SERM. LXXI.

diſpenſation, *were in bondage under the elements of the world; But when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.* The Meaning is: Before the World was prepared for the reception of the Goſpel, God thought fit to oblige men to obſerve thoſe firſt and more imperfect rudiments, which were inſtituted in the *Jewiſh* law; But when the time was come that the *Meſſiah* ſhould appear, God did by him aboliſh *That* inſtitution of religion, (at leaſt as to the Neceſſity of its being embraced by the *Gentiles*) and redeemed or freed men from the ſervile obedience thereof; requiring from them thenceforward, only That free, That manly and rational obedience, which is the duty and privilege not of Servants but of Sons; *That we might receive the Adoption of Sons.*

In the Words we may obſerve, 1*ſt*, The Character of the perſon ſent into the World; *God ſent forth his Son.* 2*dly*, His Condition and Manner of Converſation among men; *he was made of a woman, made under the law.* 3*dly*, The Deſign of this his coming; it was *To redeem thoſe that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.* And 4*thly*, The particular Time of his appearing; *When the fulneſs of time was come.*

1*ſt*, Here is the Character of the perſon ſent into the World; *God ſent forth his Son.* The Phraſe is of the ſame import, with thoſe other expreſſions we meet with in Scripture; *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life*; Joh. iii. 16: and, *God who at ſundry times and in divers manners ſpake in times paſt unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son*; Heb. i. 1. The Meaning is: God having of old eſtabliſhed ſeveral Forms of Religion among men, by divers ways of revelation, by diſcovering himſelf to the Patriarchs, by the delivering of the law to *Moſes*, and by the preaching of the prophets; and all theſe Methods having proved ſeverally ineffectual to make men truly virtuous, to recover God's Creation from the *Corruption and Bondage* of Sin, and much *more* inſufficient to afford any effectual means of redeeming them from the *Guilt* thereof; he did at laſt in mercy and compaſſion to mankind vouchſafe to afford them one more clear and perfect revelation of his Will, by the preaching of a perſon of far greater excellence and authority than *Any before*; even by his *own Son.* This expreſſion therefore *of God's ſending forth his Son*, implies plainly theſe two things; *firſt*, that the perſon here declared to be ſent forth into the World, was in a ſingular and peculiar manner the Son of God; and 2*dly*, that he was *with* God, before he was ſent into the World. 1*ſt*, The perſon here declared to be ſent into the World, was in a peculiar manner the Son of God. Many Senſes there are in which a perſon may be ſaid to be the Son of God; and in great variety of ſignification does the Scripture itſelf make uſe of this expreſſion. The *Angels* are ſtiled the *Sons of God*, Job xxxviii. 7; and *Adam* is ſaid to be the *Son of God*, Luk. iii. 38; becauſe immediately created by him: They who are *ſanctified* by the *Spirit of God*, are called the *Sons of God*, Rom. viii. 14; becauſe they live in obedience to his government, and ſo are Members of his Family or Houſhold; They who ſhall be thought worthy to obtain *that life which is to come*, are called the *Sons of God*, Luk. xx. 36; becauſe they are as it were anew created of God, being the Children of the Reſurrection, to eternal Happineſs: They who are appointed to any *high Office* by the ſpecial and immediate Will of God, are alſo called *Gods*, or the *Sons of God*, becauſe they act in his ſtead, or as his Vicegerents; and in this Senſe our Saviour himſelf uſes the phraſe in his Reply to the *Jews*; John x. 34; *Is it not written in your law, I ſaid ye are Gods? If he called them Gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, Say ye of him whom the Father hath ſanctified and ſent into the world, thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid I am the Son of God?* Theſe therefore and ſome other Senſes there are, in which the Scripture gives men that great title of being *the Sons of God.* And the *reaſon why* any perſon is ſo called, is generally expreſly added, or at leaſt plainly included in the words; as in the inſtance of *Adam*; of thoſe who ſhall be raiſed from the Dead; and of Princes, or ſanctified Men and Prophets being ſtiled *the Sons of God.* But when the title is given to our Bleſſed Saviour it is given him either abſolutely and by way of eminence,

nence, or with ſome high and particular Note of diſtinction. It is ſometimes given him *abſolutely* and by way of *eminence*; as in the Text he is called *The* Son of God; and then 'tis plain from the manner of the expreſſion, that it is to be underſtood in a high and peculiar Senſe: For when a title which may be given men upon different reſpects, and frequently is ſo in very different ſignifications, according to the occaſion upon which it is conferred, and with manifeſt reference to that occaſion; when I ſay ſuch a title is given to any particular perſon *abſolutely and by way of eminence*, it is manifeſt it is then to be underſtood in the higheſt and moſt excellent Senſe. In *other* paſſages of Scripture, this title is given him with ſome high and particular Note of *diſtinction*, as *only begotten*, *beloved*, God's *dear* Son, his *own* Son, and the like: *Rom.* viii. 3; *What the law could not do in that it was weak through the fleſh, God ſending his* own *Son in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and* for *Sin*, *i. e.* as the Words may more properly be rendred, *by being a* Sacrifice *for Sin, condemned Sin in the fleſh:* and *Joh.* i. 14; *The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt amongſt us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the* only begotten *of the Father, full of grace and truth.* The Angels (as I before obſerved) are called *the Sons of God*; Job xxxviii. 7. But unto which of the Angels ſaid he at any time with ſo peculiar an Emphaſis, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* Heb. i. 5. This therefore is ſo diſtinguiſhing an expreſſion, that it neceſſarily implies our Saviour to be the Son of God in a different and more exalted ſenſe than the Angels themſelves are; For in the next verſe the Apoſtle brings *Them* in as his Miniſters, ſubjected unto him, and paying honour to him; ver. 6; *When he bringeth in the firſt begotten into the World, he ſaith, And let all the* Angels *of God worſhip him.* And ch. ii. ver. 16; 'Tis ſaid, *He took not on him the nature of Angels*, (which ſhows that it would have been a great condeſcenſion in him to have done even *That*) *but he took upon him the ſeed of Abraham, i. e.* the nature of *Man*: But becauſe this was written to the *Jews*, among whom Chriſt was born, and to whom he firſt preached, therefore it is not ſaid the Nature of *Men*, but the Seed of *Abraham*. Further; even in that ſingular and peculiar application of it to *our Lord only*, there is alſo ſome variety: For he is ſo ſtiled, on account of his miraculous conception, *Luke* i. 35; then, of his Office, *Joh.* x. 34; then, of his Reſurrection, *Acts* xiii. 33, and *Rom.* i. 4; then, of his being appointed Heir of all things, and as a Son in his own houſe; *Heb.* iii. 6. But beyond all this, there is ſtill ſomething further implied in the Uſe of this Phraſe: For the Text ſuppoſes, ſecondly, that he was *with* God, in the boſom of the Father, before he was ſent into the World; *God ſent forth his Son*; For though the word which we here render, *ſend forth*, be alſo applied in Scripture to God's ſending his Prophets to the *Jews*, and our Saviour's commiſſioning his Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel; and ſo may properly ſignify in *general*, *only* the *appointing* a perſon to execute any office or commiſſion, yet when it is applied to our Saviour's *coming into* the *World*, (or coming forth from the Father into the World) as in the words now mentioned, it clearly implies, that he who was thus ſent *into the world from God*, was *with* God, in the glory of the Father, before he was ſent into the World: As appears both from the natural Force of the expreſſion itſelf, and more fully from thoſe parallel places of Scripture, which mention to us the ſame thing. *Joh.* xvii. 5; Our Saviour prays thus to his Father, *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had* with *thee before the world was*: Again *Joh.* iii. 13; *No man hath aſcended into Heaven, but he that came down* from *Heaven, even the Son of man which is in Heaven*: And again, ch. xvi. 28; he ſaith unto his Diſciples, *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* Which words his Diſciples thought ſo plainly to ſignify his having been *with* God, in the glory of the Father, before he was ſent into the World; that they immediately anſwered him; ver. 29; *Now ſpeakeſt thou plainly, and ſpeakeſt no parable: By this we believe that thou cameſt forth from God.* The *Uſe* the Scripture makes of This conſideration, *of the Dignity of the Perſon*, by whom God has been pleaſed to declare his Mercy in the Goſpel; that it was *the only begotten Son of God*, ſent down from Heaven to take our Nature upon him; I ſay, the *Uſe* which the Scripture makes of This conſideration, is This: *Heb.* ii. 2; *If the word ſpoken by* Angels *was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience*

SERM. LXXI.

SERM. LXXI.

diſobedience received a juſt recompence of Reward; How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the LORD!

Secondly, Here is a deſcription of this divine Perſon's *condition*, and his manner of *converſation* in the World; *He was made of a woman, made under the Law.* He was made of a Woman, *i. e.* he became truly and really a Man; not taking upon him only the ſimilitude of our Nature, and appearing in the form and appearance of a Man, but being really and truly ſuch; *ſubjected to all the infirmities of human nature, and tempted in all points like as we are, yet without ſin*; Heb. iv. 15. For (as the Apoſtle obſerves; *Heb.* ii. 17;) *in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-prieſt, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people: For in that he himſelf hath ſuffered, being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted.* It follows; *he was made under the law*; *i. e.* he was ſubject and obedient to it. By the *law*, ſome underſtand here the moral law of God; and that, by our Saviour's being made under the law, is meant his performing perfect and complete obedience to the law of God: that ſo, by having in his own perſon unſinning obedience to the law of God, he might become the Author of eternal Salvation, to all thoſe that ſhould believe and repent; and that by having firſt obeyed thoſe commandments himſelf, to which he required obedience from others, he might become an example of obedience to his Diſciples. All which, is indeed very true: But yet, becauſe by *the law* the Apoſtle in this Epiſtle means generally the ceremonial law, or that part of the *Moſaick* inſtitution which is oppoſed to the Chriſtian religion, and ſuperſeded by it; and becauſe 'tis moſt probable he muſt in this place concerning our Saviour's ſubmitting to *that* law, which in the words immediately following 'tis ſaid the deſign of his coming into the World was to redeem men from; therefore 'tis more reaſonable to conclude, that, by his being *made under the law*, the Apoſtle intends in this place, that our Saviour was born in the nation and under the religion of the *Jews*; that he was circumciſed according to the commandment of *Moſes*; that he ſubmitted to and performed the whole ceremonial law, (fulfilling even in *that* ſenſe all righteouſneſs;) that having perfectly obeyed the law in his Life, he might for ever aboliſh that part of it at his Death, and free his followers from the Servitude thereof.

3*dly*, Here is the *End* and *Deſign* of his coming thus into the World, ſet forth in the laſt part of the words; *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.* The ſame phraſe the Apoſtle again makes uſe of in the Epiſtle to the *Romans*; ch. viii. ver. 15; *Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of* adoption, *whereby we cry Abba, Father*; *i. e.* God deals not with Us as a Maſter with his Servants, but as a Father with his Sons, requiring of us not any hard and burdenſome ſervice, but only a rational and ſincere obedience. Our Lord came *to redeem them that were under the law*; *i. e.* to abrogate the burdenſome ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* inſtitution; *That we might receive the* adoption *of Sons*; *i. e.* that he might eſtabliſh with men a New Covenant, which ſhould be moſt *eaſy* to obſerve, and moſt *ſufficient* to juſtify thoſe that ſhould obſerve it. Moſt *eaſy* to obſerve, is this Covenant of the Goſpel; becauſe its precepts are not poſitive and carnal Ordinances, but the great duties of the moral and eternal law of God, which are abſolutely and in their own nature moſt acceptable to God, and moſt perfective of men; and 'tis moſt *ſufficient* to juſtify thoſe who ſhall live according to it, becauſe their works ſhall not be judged with ſtrictneſs and rigour, but through the interceſſion of Chriſt, their ſincerity ſhall be accepted inſtead of perfect obedience: In the *former* reſpect (its being eaſy to obſerve;) the Chriſtian inſtitution is called the *Law of Liberty*; Jam. i. 25: and the *glorious liberty* of the Sons of God; *Rom.* viii. 21: and *Gal.* iv. 7; *Wherefore thou art no more a ſervant, but a Son.* In the *latter* reſpect, namely, in reſpect of its ſufficiency to juſtify thoſe that ſhall live ſuitably to it, the Chriſtian inſtitution is called the *righteouſneſs of God*: Rom. iii. 20, 21; *By the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified. But now the* righteouſneſs of God *without the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the prophets; even the* righteouſneſs of God, *which is by Faith in* Jeſus Chriſt, *unto all and upon all them that believe*; And, *by it all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be*

juſtified

SERM. LXXI.

juſtified by the law of law of Moſes; Acts xiii. 39. There being ſeveral great Crimes, for which no regular Expiation was allowed under the law; from which Curſe, men are now by true Repentance and Amendment, delivered under the Goſpel: Which is *therefore* ſtiled the Righteouſneſs of God to men. This is the Adoption, whereby we become Sons of God, and Heirs of Salvation: This is the Liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free: We are not obliged to any impoſſible performances, nor to any grievous and burdenſome rites; but if we ſincerely repent, and return to the obedience of God's Commands, according to the gracious Terms and Conditions of the Goſpel; we ſhall, through the interceſſion of Chriſt, be accepted by our heavenly Father. But then we muſt always remember that *without* this obedience we ſhall ſtill be rejected, notwithſtanding what our Saviour has done for us; nay we ſhall be condemned with ſo much a *ſeverer* Sentence, as he has afforded us greater means and opportunities of Salvation. Chriſt has given us the adoption and the liberty of Sons; but if we abuſe that liberty to rebel againſt God and diſobey his Commandments, living viciouſly and profanely in this preſent World; *it had been better for us not to have known the way of truth, than after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us.* Our Saviour has purchaſed redemption for us upon the gracious terms of Faith and Obedience; but *without* this Obedience, we can have no benefit, even of *That* moſt perfect redemption. Chriſt has ſuffered for us, that we might receive the adoption of Sons; but if we continue not to live virtuouſly as becomes the children of God, it will nothing profit us to have received this adoption. *They only who are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God*; Rom. viii. 14. Wherefore if we reſiſt and grieve that good Spirit by *any* vicious practices, we have no part in him, neither will God receive us either as his Sons or his Servants. *Whoſoever is born of God*, ſaith St. *John*, *doth not commit Sin, for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin becauſe he is born of God: In this the children of God are manifeſt and the children of the devil: Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother*; 1 Joh. iii. 9: Again; ver. 2; *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; But we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is*; *i.e.* God doth in *This world* acknowledge us as his children; how much *more* hereafter, ſhall he that thus *ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, receive us to the more immediate enjoyment of himſelf? But then he adds immediately; ver. 3; *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.* This is the only *poſſible* condition, upon which we can obtain the Salvation of the Goſpel. Nay, on the contrary, we cannot eſcape being condemned to a ſeverer puniſhment, if we neglect the offer of ſo great a Salvation. For if *he that deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without mercy*, Heb. x. 28; *of how much ſorer puniſhment ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace?*

SERMON LXXII.

Of the Fulneſs of Time in which CHRIST appeared.

[*Preached on Chriſtmas-Day.*]

GAL. iv. 4, 5.

But when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law; To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.

SERM. LXXII.

IT remains, that I proceed now in the 4th and laſt place, to conſider the Time of our Saviour's appearing in the fleſh; *When the fulneſs of time was come.* Now here, By the *fulneſs of time*, we muſt underſtand *that* time, which God in his infinite Wiſdom thought fit to appoint; And we may conſider it either with reſpect to God's Fore-determination; and then it was therefore the *fulneſs of time*, becauſe determined and fore-appointed of God; or we may conſider it abſolutely as the fitteſt and moſt proper ſeaſon; and then it was fore-appointed by the Wiſdom of God, becauſe it was in itſelf the *fulneſs of time*. 1*ſt*; We may conſider it with reſpect to God's Fore-determination; and then it was therefore the Fulneſs of time, becauſe determined and foretold by the prophets.

According

According to that antient prediction of *Jacob*; *Gen.* xlix. 10; the Meſſiah was to appear before the total diſſolution of the *Jewiſh* Government. *The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come; and unto him ſhall the gathering of the people be.* By the word *Shiloh*, the antient *Jewiſh* interpreters conſtantly underſtood the Meſſiah; and the *Jews* at this day are not able to interpret it to any other tolerable Senſe: Now it is certain, that after our Saviour's Coming; as ſoon as the *gathering* of the people, (or as the word may no leſs properly be rendered, the *obedience* of the people) was come *in* to him; *viz.* as ſoon as he had ſettled that inſtitution of Religion, which he came into the World to eſtabliſh; *Jeruſalem was* deſtroyed, the whole nation of the *Jews* diſperſed, and ſcattered among *all* people; and the conſtitution of their government entirely diſſolved. Our Saviour therefore *did* appear exactly at that period of Time, which the Prophecy of *Jacob* had ſo many ages before expreſly determined. Again; the Prophecy of *Malachi*; ch. iii. 1; determines the Coming of our Saviour to be before the deſtruction of the Second Temple; *Behold I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare my way before me, and the Lord whom ye ſeek ſhall ſuddenly come, he ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple; even the meſſenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* And *That* no leſs remarkable prediction of *Haggai*; ch. ii. ver. 6, 7, and 9; *Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, Yet once it is a little while and I will ſhake the heavens and the earth, and the ſea and the dry land; And I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will* fill This houſe *with glory, ſaith the Lord of hoſts; The glory of* this latter *houſe ſhall be* greater *than of the former; and in this place will I give peace.* The ſolemn and *ſublime introduction* with which this prophecy is uſhered in, ſhows plainly that ſomething of very great moment is therein foretold and promiſed; And the *Words* of the Prediction *itſelf* ſufficiently intimate, *when* and *in whom* they were to be fulfilled.

SERM. LXXII.

The deſire, or (as the word may more properly be rendered,) *the* expectation *of all nations*; is a clear and undiſputed character of the Meſſiah: And as to the *filling That Houſe with* greater *Glory than the former*, it is well known that That Second Temple was very *far* from equalling the Glory of *Solomon*'s, in the magnificence of its *Building*, or in its *rich ornaments*: And beſides the *Jews* themſelves confeſs, that the Second Temple always wanted thoſe five things, which were juſtly eſteemed the great Glory and Excellence of the firſt. It wanted *the Urim and Thummin, the Ark of the Covenant, the Fire from heaven which burnt continually on the Altar, the Shecinah or viſible appearance of the glory of God, and the Spirit of Prophecy.* It remains therefore that the Glory wherein this Second Temple was to exceed the Firſt, could be no other than This; that it was to be honoured with the Preſence of the *King of Glory*, even *the promiſed Meſſias*; Which would indeed be a far *greater* Glory, than all the riches of *Solomon*'s Temple. Accordingly our Saviour *did* appear, during the ſtanding of that Second Temple; he was preſented therein by his parents, and acknowledged by *Simeon* and *Anna*, who praiſed God for him, and *ſpoke of him to all thoſe that looked for redemption in Iſrael*; He alſo frequently *Taught* therein, and by his Gracious preſence filled that houſe with *glory*; with the *Glory*, as of the only-begotten Son of God, full of Grace and Truth; with the *Glory of God*, manifeſted in the moſt illuſtrious *miracles*; with the *glorious Doctrine* of Peace and Salvation, of Grace, Righteouſneſs, and Truth. And to demonſtrate that this prophecy was fulfilled in *him*, and could not poſſibly belong to any other, God, in his righteous judgment, not many years after our Saviour's Paſſion, ſuffered this Temple, at the final deſtruction of the City and People, to be ſo utterly overthrown and deſtroyed, that *not one ſtone was left upon another*, nor could it ever by any induſtry be built again. *Laſtly*, That moſt clear prophecy of *Daniel*; ch. ix. ver. 24; *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to finiſh the tranſgreſſion, and to make an end of ſins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and to anoint the moſt Holy*; (who in the next verſe is called *by name*, Meſſiah the Prince;) This prophecy, I ſay, determines the time from the rebuilding of the city after the captivity to the coming of the Meſſias, to be ſeven times Seventy, *viz.* Four hundred and ninety years: Exactly after which period of time, (the different computations of Chronologers in

SERM. LXXII.

in this point, being but ſmall Niceties;) exactly, I ſay, after this period of time, the Hiſtory of our Saviour ſhows us that he appeared in the World. It is evident therefore that the incarnation of Chriſt was *in the fulneſs of time*; that is, exactly at the time foretold and fore-determined by the Prophets. And indeed theſe Prophecies were ſo plain, that about the time of our Lord's appearance, the *Jews*, and from them the *Romans*, and all the Eaſtern parts of the World, were in great expectation of ſome extraordinary perſon to ariſe, who ſhould be Governor of the World. This made *Herod* ſo inquiſitive and ſollicitous, about *him that was born king of the Jews*; St. *Mat.* ii. 2: And this gave occaſion to the impoſtors, *Theudas and Judas of Galilee*, (of whom we read; *Acts* v. 36.) to profeſs themſelves to be ſome great perſons, and to draw away much people after them. The *Jews* were at that Time *filled* with expectation of the appearance of their promiſed Meſſiah; and from thence theſe Deceivers took occaſion to ſet up for themſelves; But as they managed their impoſture in Such manner, as to ſuit with the *prejudices* and *falſe* notions the *Jews* had then conceived of their expected Meſſiah, ſo they acted directly contrary to his *True* character; and their deſigns came accordingly to a deſerved end.

But *2dly*, Though it be evident that our Saviour came into the World *in the fulneſs of time*, *viz.* at the time foretold by the prophets, yet the queſtion may ſtill return, *why* was *That* time determined rather than any other, and accordingly foretold by the Prophets; for, without doubt, it was in itſelf *abſolutely* the fitteſt and the propereſt ſeaſon; and the Incarnation of our Lord was *therefore* by the Prophets fixed beforehand to that time, *becauſe* it was the *full*, or moſt *proper* Seaſon. And to This queſtion it might be ſufficient to anſwer, that the time of our Saviour's incarnation, as all *Other* times and ſeaſons which the Father has put in his own power, was *therefore* the fitteſt, and the propereſt ſeaſon, becauſe it was the time choſen by the infinite and unerring Wiſdom of God: But yet it cannot be denied to be an argument worthy our conſideration, to enquire into the *reaſons* of our Saviour's Coming into the World at ſuch a particular time rather than any other ſo far as the hiſtory of the *Scripture*, which is what God has thought fit to open to us of his Divine Counſel; and ſo far as the *deſign* itſelf of our Lord's coming, will ſuggeſt to us. Now *Two* reaſons there ſeem to have been more eſpecially, of our Saviour's appearing at That time: The firſt is, becauſe the inſufficiency of the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, as well as of natural religion, was then, after a long trial, become ſufficiently apparent: Apparent; not to *God*, who knows all things at Once, and makes accordingly Proviſion for all things from the Beginning; and who is able to judge all men with juſtice and equity, according to their reſpective Circumſtances under Every Diſpenſation: but to *Men*, to whom the Counſel of God is opened by degrees, and by the Events of things; to *Them*, the inſufficiency of the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation was by that Time become apparent. What *the law* could not *do*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *in That it was weak through the fleſh, God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and* for *Sin condemned ſin in the fleſh*; Rom. viii. 3. And in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, the ſame Apoſtle all along inſiſts on the *inſufficiency* of the *Jewiſh* inſtitution, as an Argument to demonſtrate the *neceſſity* of introducing the *Chriſtian*: *For if that firſt covenant*, ſaith he, *had been faultleſs, then ſhould no place have been ſought for the ſecond*; Heb. viii. 7: and ch. vii. ver. 18; *There is verily a diſannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakneſs and unprofitableneſs thereof.* In the *old* World, when men had entirely corrupted themſelves, and almoſt wholly loſt that natural and traditional Knowledge of God, which was at firſt the foundation of their Religion, and the rule of their lives; God began to reveal himſelf to *Abraham* and the Patriarchs; and choſe their Poſterity to give them afterwards his Laws by *Moſes*, and to make them the Standard of true Religion, and of the Worſhip of the One God, to all Nations. Again, when this *new* Diſpenſation of Providence began likewiſe to grow ineffectual as the former had done, through the Vanity and Superſtition wherewith it was by degrees over-run; When the commandments of God were almoſt wholly ſwallowed up by the traditions of Men, and the weightier matters of the law forced to give place to the ſuperſtitious doctrines of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*; then was the time for *him* to appear, who, as the prophet *Malachi* deſcribes him,

him, *was to be like a refiner's fire, and like fullers ſoap; who was to ſit as a refiner and purifier of ſilver, and to purify the ſons of Levi, and purge them as gold and ſilver, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteouſneſs*; Mal. iii. 3. SERM. LXXII.

2*dly*; The Second reaſon, *why* we may ſuppoſe our Saviour appeared juſt at the time he did, was becauſe the World was at that time by many extraordinary circumſtances, peculiarly prepared for his reception. The great deſign of his Coming, (we know,) was to eſtabliſh a Religion, which as it was to continue for ever without any further alteration, ſo it was not (like the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation) to be confined to one particular Nation or People, but to be *preached to all the nations of the earth from one end thereof unto the other: His Dominion ſhall be alſo from the one Sea to the other, and from the Flood unto the World's end: All Kings ſhall fall down before him, all nations ſhall do him Service*; Pſ. lxxii. 8, 11. The Goſpel of Chriſt, was to be an univerſal Religion; *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as to be *the glory of his people Iſrael*; According to that remarkable prophecy of *Iſaiah*; ch. xlix. ver. 6; *It is a light thing, that thou ſhould be my ſervant to raiſe up the tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of Iſrael; I will alſo give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my ſalvation unto the ends of the earth.* Now about the time of our Saviour's Birth, it is obſervable there was a concurrence of many things in the World, to promote and further the propagating of *Such* a Religion. The *Romans* had then conquered almoſt all the *known* parts of the World; they had ſpread and ſettled their language among all the nations of their conqueſts, and had made the communication eaſy from one part to another. They had moreover improved *moral* Philoſophy to its greateſt height; and by having framed better notions of God and of the nature of things, than were uſual in the idolatrous Heathen World, they were in ſome meaſure prepared for the Reception of the Truth. This appears plainly from the vaſt numbers of *Proſelytes*, which were about this time converted to the *Jewiſh* Religion; ſo far converted, as to believe in and worſhip the One only true God, and to obey the moral Law, yet without obſerving the ritual and ceremonial performances of the *Moſaick* inſtitution. Theſe Proſelytes are they which in the Hiſtory of the *Acts of the Apoſtles* are ſtiled *devout men, worſhippers of God*, and men *fearing God*; Of whom how great numbers there were at That time, may be ſeen in the 2d chapter of the *Acts*; ver. 5, &c. where it is ſaid *that there were dwelling at Jeruſalem devout men out of every nation under heaven; Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Meſopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Aſia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and ſtrangers of Rome, Jews and Proſelytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them ſpeak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Further; the great improvement and increaſe of *Learning* in the World about this time, (according to that prophecy of *Daniel, Many ſhall run to and fro, and knowledge ſhall be increaſed*;) gave occaſion to the *Jewiſh* books to be diſperſed through the World: And particularly, the tranſlating of the Bible ſome few Ages before the Birth of Chriſt, into one of the then moſt known and univerſal languages upon Earth, which had before been confined in a peculiar language to the *Jews* only; was a ſingular preparative to the reception of that great Prophet and Saviour of mankind, whoſe Coming was in that Book ſo plainly and ſo often foretold. Indeed this ſeems to have been the firſt ſtep of God's diſcovering himſelf further than by the Light of Nature to *other* nations as well as to the *Jews*, and of his giving the *heathen alſo* the knowledge of his revealed laws; And remarkably inſtrumental it afterwards appeared to be, in the propagating the Chriſtian religion through the *Gentile World*.

But I barely mention theſe things, as only brief intimations to inquiſitive and conſiderate perſons; and haſten in the laſt place, to draw ſome more univerſally *uſeful* and *practical* inferences, from the particulars of the doctrine contained in the Text. And 1*ſt*, If our Saviour came into the World preciſely at the time determined and foretold by the prophets; then have we from hence an unanſwerable proof of our Saviour's being the true Meſſiah. For if our Lord appeared exactly at that time, which God by his Holy prophets had before appointed ſhould be the time when the promiſed Meſſias, the deſire and expectation of nations, was to appear; and no other perſon did ariſe *near* that time, to whom that Character

SERM. LXXII.

could poſſibly belong; then have we an undeniable evidence that our Saviour *was* that Perſon, whom the prophets did point at and deſcribe. And this evidence is ſo convictive and unanſwerable, that the *Jews* at this day have no other way to elude the force of it, but by pretending that though God had indeed foretold poſitively by his Prophets that the Meſſias ſhould appear about that time, yet for the Sins of that nation he has deferred the *ſending* of the Meſſiah, and the *fulfilling* of thoſe prophecies, for above Seventeen hundred years. But there are moreover *two* peculiar circumſtances, which make this argument yet more ſtrong and concluding; the *firſt* is, that as our Saviour appeared exactly at the time determined by the prophets, ſo his *character* agreed perfectly with all the deſcriptions, which the prophecies had given of *That* perſon, whoſe Coming was foretold. I need not enlarge upon This particularly; the Evangeliſts having in their goſpels, with all clearneſs and evidence, applied to the Hiſtory of our Saviour all the ſeveral paſſages of the prophets, which ſpeak of the *time* and *place* of the birth of the Meſſiah; the *manner* of his education; the *courſe* of his life; the *nature* and extent of his *doctrine*; the peculiar *circumſtances* of his paſſion and death; and That moſt remarkable inſtance of the divine power, his Reſurrection from the Dead. The *Other* obſervable circumſtance is, that as the character of our Saviour was exactly agreeable to the prophets deſcription of the true Meſſiah, ſo it was very different *from, and almoſt contrary* to, *the character of* that imaginary Meſſiah whom the *Jews* expected. And This particular Circumſtance, is a demonſtration that our Saviour had no deſign of impoſing upon the people. The *Jews* expected a temporal Prince, to appear in all the Splendor, glory and power of this world; to deliver them from their Subjection to the *Roman* yoke, and to reſtore again the kingdom to *Iſrael*. 'Tis manifeſt therefore that whatever Deceiver would have ſet up himſelf for the Meſſiah, and hoped to be owned as ſuch by the people of the *Jews*, muſt have endeavoured to have appeared in ſuch a Character, as the *Jews* expected; he muſt have blown the trumpet to ſedition, and by gathering men after him, have endeavoured to make himſelf their Prince and King: And in Fact, this method we find thoſe impoſtors did take, whoſe Attempts are mentioned, *Acts* v. 36. But *our Saviour*, directly contrary to the expectation of the *Jews*, was a man, with reſpect to all *worldly* grandeur, of no form or comelineſs; a man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief; a perſon of ſeemingly mean extraction, and of greater humility: So that when ſome of the multitude would by force have made him a King, he was content even to work a Miracle, to eſcape out of their hands. 'Tis manifeſt therefore that he had no ambition, to exalt himſelf among the people. Now when in ſuch a perſon, whoſe character was entirely contrary to the humour and expectation of the people, it appeared yet manifeſtly, that in Him was really fulfilled every thing, that was ſpoken in the law and in the prophets concerning the Meſſias that was to come; it is no leſs than a demonſtration that this was the very perſon, to whom thoſe prophecies did expreſly point. *2dly*, If our Saviour, (the perſon ſent into the world to be the Author of our Religion,) was, notwithſtanding his taking upon him that humble Form, yet in reality no meaner a Perſon than the only begotten Son of God; this may convince us of the divine Authority of our Religion, and the indiſpenſable neceſſity of paying Obedience to its laws. The *Natural Knowledge* of the difference of Good and Evil, which even the *heathen* World was capable of attaining, was truly and properly a Diſcovery of the Will of God; But becauſe this diſcovery was very obſcure, and very hardly ſufficient to prevail over the corruptions of Mens depraved Nature; therefore the times of that ignorance *God winked at*; Acts xvii. 30: But now that the *wrath of God* is clearly and expreſly, and by a meſſenger of ſuch Dignity as his own Son, revealed from heaven againſt all *ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*; now that he hath fully and diſtinctly declared that *he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man whom he hath ordained*; Now he commandeth all men abſolutely, every where to repent. God hath now ſent his *laſt* meſſenger to warn Men of their ſin and danger; even his own *beloved Son*; and if they will not hear and obey *him*, they muſt expect to fall under ſo much a more ſevere puniſhment, as they deſpiſe a clearer Revelation of the Will of God, and trample under foot a more glorious

Meſſenger

Messenger of his covenant. If the word spoken by Angels, saith the Apostle; *if the* Mosaick law, *was stedfast; and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by* the Lord; Heb. ii. 2 and 3? And ch. xii. ver. 25; *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; For if* They *escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth; much more shall not* We *escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.* And again, in the Epistle of St. *Jude*; the danger of impenitent Christians under such clear means of Knowledge is represented by the Apostle under this severe similitude, ver. 5 and 6; *I will therefore put you in remembrance, —— that the Angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under Darkness, unto the judgment of the great Day.* SERM. LXXII.

3*dly*, If this *Divine person*, the Author of our religion, notwithstanding the exceeding dignity of his nature, *yet* condescended to become truly and really a man; subjecting himself to all the infirmities of human nature, *and being in all things made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted*; This may convince us of the reasonableness of our Holy Religion; and of the possibility of our paying obedience to its laws. Had God sent his Son in great *Glory*, and in the *Form of God*, to reveal his Will to us by his absolute *command* only; such an extraordinary Revelation, like *the Mountain that burned with Fire*, would indeed have sufficiently convinced us of the necessity of Religion and the indispensableness of obedience. But when this great person vouchsafed to become, not only the Author of our Religion, but in our own Nature the *pattern* also of our duty; this demonstrated to us, that our Obedience was to be as reasonable, as it was indispensable. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar example of Holiness and Obedience set before us; by which we plainly see, that God requires nothing of us, but what our Saviour himself, when he submitted to become Man, did think reasonable to practise. Indeed, we *cannot* be in all things perfect, as he, who is our pattern and example, was perfect: But to follow a most perfect Pattern, is, even to an imperfect Copier, a singular Advantage; and our Duty, is not to *equal*, but to *imitate* so far, as the infirmities of our nature will permit, with Sincerity and Constancy. We shall in our proportion, be made as like him in our *happiness* as we have been in the performance of our *duty*.

SERMON

SERMON LXXIII.

Of the meaning of, The Name of GOD.

[*Preached on Epiphany.*]

MAL. i. 11.

For from the rising of the Sun, even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place, Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name shall be Great *among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

SERM. LXXIII.

IN discoursing upon these words of the Prophet, I shall *1st* explain distinctly the principal acceptations, or the most remarkable of those several different Senses, in which this Phrase, the *Name of God*, is used in Scripture; From whence in course will appear, what is meant *in general* by its being *Great* among *Men*. And This being explained, I shall then in the *2d* place, consider, *What* That glorious Event *in particular* is, which we find predicted in these sublime prophetick Expressions: *From the rising of the Sun, even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be Great among the Gentiles; and in every place, Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

I. In the 1*st* place, the *Name of God*, according to the nature of the *Jewish* language, ſignifies ſometimes *God himſelf*. Thus *praiſing* or *bleſſing* the Name of God, is praiſing *God himſelf*; and calling upon the Name of the Lord, is the very ſame, as calling upon the *Lord*. Something anſwerable to which manner of ſpeaking, there is in many *other* inſtances of the *Hebrew* language, and in the *Analogy of expreſſion* in *all* languages. Thus *Heb.* viii. 1; *The Throne of the* Majeſty *in the heavens*, is, the Throne of *God*: And *Pſ.* cxlv. 5; *I will ſpeak of the glorious Honour of thy* Majeſty, *and of thy wondrous works.* SERM. LXXIII.

Now when the *Name* of God, or any other phraſe of the like nature, is thus made uſe of to ſignify *God himſelf*; it is plain that by his *Name* being Great among Men, is meant Their acknowledging or profeſſing *him* to be the True God, and their Adhering to the Worſhip of *Him* only, in oppoſition to all Idolatry and Falſe Religions. *Mic.* iv. 5; *All people will walk every one in the* Name *of* His *God*; *and* We *will walk in the* Name *of the Lord* our *God for ever and ever*: Will *walk in his* Name, that is, we will continue ſtedfaſt in his True Religion and Worſhip; *ſanctifying the Lord God in our Hearts*, (as St. *Peter* expreſſes it,) *and not being afraid of* Their *Terror*, not fearing Their *Falſe Gods*, who fill the Minds of their Worſhippers with endleſs Dread, and vain imaginary Superſtitions. According to the ſame Analogy of Speech; That Precept in the Law, *Thou ſhalt not* profane *the* Name *of thy God*, is as much as to ſay, Thou ſhalt not incourage Idolatrous Practices, *by letting thy children paſs through the Fire to Moloch*; Lev. xviii. 21. And in the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion, forgetting *the* Name *of God*, means, for the ſame reaſon, *falling into Idolatry*: *Pſ.* xliv. 20; *If we have forgotten the* Name *of our God, or ſtretched out our hands to any Strange God.* Nay, even *mentioning* the *Name* of other Gods, denotes, in Scripture-phraſe, a tendency to Idolatry; *In all things that I have ſaid unto you, be circumſpect, and make no* mention *of the* Names *of Other Gods, neither let it be heard out of thy Mouth*; Exod. xxiii. 13.

This is the firſt and moſt uſual Signification of this phraſe, *The Name of God*; 'Tis uſed to denote *God himſelf*. And becauſe his Name, in *This* ſenſe, is Then *Great* among Men, when they moſt univerſally acknowledge him to be the True God, and adhere to the Worſhip of *Him* only; hence, in a ſenſe ſtill more figurative, the *Name of God* is ſometimes uſed,

2*dly*, To ſignify his *True Religion and Worſhip*. Thus *Deut.* xii. 5; *The place which the Lord your God ſhall chuſe out of all your Tribes, to put his* Name *there.* The Meaning is: The Place where he ſhall appoint his Servants, the Profeſſors of the true Religion, to appear before him with the External Tokens of their Homage and Worſhip. And in *This* ſenſe, the Name of God is *then Great* in the World; when they who profeſs his True Religion, and adhere to the Worſhip of *Him* alone, and to that *manner* of Worſhip which He has appointed, do Honour to this their profeſſion, by a ſuitable practice in the whole courſe of their lives; ſhowing forth the Effect of their Religion, in the Fruits of Righteouſneſs and true Virtue; and *letting their Light ſo ſhine before men, that Others ſeeing their good Works, may glorify their Father which is in Heaven.* The Apoſtle St. *Paul*, in his 2 *Theſ.* i. 12, uſes exactly the ſame manner of ſpeaking; *We pray always for you*, ſays he, *that our God would fulfil all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the Work of Faith with Power*; *That the* Name *of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt may be glorified in you*: His Meaning is, that the *Religion* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt may by your Practice be recommended to the World, and the excellency of it made manifeſt before Men. Again, *Rom.* ii. 24; ſpeaking of Such as, on the contrary, *diſcredited* their Holy Profeſſion by an unſuitable and unworthy behaviour; *Thou* (ſays he) *that makeſt thy Boaſt of the Law, through breaking the Law diſhonoureſt thou God? For the* Name of God *is blaſphemed among the Gentiles, through you.* The *Name* of God, that is, the *Religion* and true *Worſhip* of God, is reviled and ill ſpoken of among Infidels, upon account of the ill lives of its unworthy Profeſſors.

3*dly*, In *other* places of Scripture, this phraſe, *The* Name *of God*, is made uſe of to expreſs thoſe adorable *Perfections* or *Attributes*, which are as it were the proper *Denomination* and *Character* of the divine Nature. Thus *Exod.* xxxiv. 5; *The Lord deſcended in the cloud, and ſtood there with Moſes, and proclaimed the* Name *of the Lord*: *The Lord paſſed by before him, and proclaimed*; *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful*

SERM. LXXIII.

merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering and abundant in goodneſs and truth: Keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity and tranſgreſſion and Sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty: viſiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. Here the Name *of God*, ſignifies the Character or Deſcription of God, contained in a *ſummary* recapitulation of the Divine *Perfections in general*. The Same, at *other* times, denotes more diſtinctly ſome *ſpecial* and *particular* Attribute, to which the occaſion peculiarly refers. Thus *Pſ.* xx. 2; *The* Name, (that is, the Power,) *of the God of Jacob defend thee*. And *Pſ.* ix. 10; *They that know thy* Name, (that is, who have a juſt Notion of thy Veracity *and* Goodneſs,) *will put their Truſt in Thee*.

And in *Theſe* ſenſes of the phraſe, the *Name* of God is then truly *Great* among Men, when, having juſt and worthy Notions of the Divine Perfections, and living under the continual influence of theſe impreſſions upon their Minds, they ſhow in their whole Behaviour that they really and habitually *fear* his *Power*, *admire* his *Wiſdom*, *revere* his *Juſtice*, *love* his *Goodneſs*, and *rely upon* his *Truth*: In all their Words and Actions, acknowledging *Him* to be the *only Potentate*; Him, *only Holy*; Him, *only Wiſe*; and that, abſolutely and ſtrictly ſpeaking, *there is none* Good, but *One*, *that is God*.

4*thly*, There is ſtill *another* ſenſe of the phraſe; in which the Name *of God* ſignifies in Scripture the *Authority* of God, or his *divine Commiſſion*. Thus *Exod.* xxii. 20; *Behold, I ſend an Angel before thee; Beware of him, and obey his Voice; provoke him not; For my* Name (that is, my *Authority*,) *is in him*. Again, *Joh.* v. 43; *I am come*, ſays our Saviour, *in my Father's* Name, that is, with his Divine *Commiſſion*. In like manner the Apoſtles, when they were examined before the High-Prieſt concerning their having healed a lame man; *Acts* iv. 7; *By what Power, or by what* Name *have ye done This?* immediately they replied, *By the* Name *of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth, whom Ye crucified, whom God raiſed from the dead; even by Him* (by *His Name and Power*, by *his Authority and Commiſſion* delivered to Us) *does this man ſtand here before you Whole*.

And according to *This laſt* ſenſe of the phraſe, the Name *of God* muſt be *then* underſtood to be *Great* among Men, when a juſt Regard and cheerful Obedience is paid to whatever appears veſted with *His* Authority: When the Laws of *Nature* are obeyed, as being eſtabliſhed by his Supreme Authority in the *Creation* of things; And the Precepts of the *Goſpel* likewiſe, as being by *Revelation* authorized from the Same Supreme Power.

And Thus having at large explained the principal Acceptations, or the moſt remarkable of thoſe ſeveral different Senſes, in which this phraſe, *The Name of God*, is uſed in Scripture; and what accordingly is meant *in general* by its being *Great*: It remains in the

II. 2*d* place, that I proceed to conſider, *what* that glorious Event *in particular* is, which we find predicted in theſe ſublime Prophetick Expreſſions: *From the riſing of the Sun, even unto the going down of the ſame, my Name ſhall be great among the Gentiles; And in every place, Incenſe ſhall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; For my Name ſhall be great among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Now in this prediction there is evidently contained, 1*ſt*, Something *comminatory*, or by way of *Threatning*, with regard to the *Jews*; And, 2*dly*, a particular *Promiſe* in relation to the *Gentiles*; joined with a general Declaration concerning the State and Condition of the *Univerſal Church* in the future and latter Ages of the World.

1*ſt*, With regard to the *Jews*, there is contained in the Text, Something *Comminatory*, or in the way of *Threatning*; as is evident from the *Connexion* of the words. For the *former part* of the chapter, is a ſevere expoſtulation with That people, upon account of their unworthy behaviour in the Service of God: And this Complaint againſt the *Jews*, is immediately followed with God's declaring in the Text, that his Name ſhould be Great among the *Gentiles*. The Advantages which the *Jewiſh* Nation enjoyed, were very extraordinary; in that *to Them were committed the Oracles of God. He ſhowed his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and Ordinances unto Iſrael; He had not dealt ſo with any Other Nation, neither had the Heathen Knowledge of his Laws*. Anſwerable to theſe high privileges, it was

reaſonable

reaſonable to expect, that their improvements in Virtue and all Holineſs, ſhould have been proportionably Great: For *to whom much is given, of Him,* according to the Rule of Equity, *will be much required.* But ſo contrary to this expectation was the Behaviour of That people, that with a juſt Severity God complains of them by the Prophets, ver. 6. of this chapter; *If I be a Father, where is mine Honour? If I be a Maſter, where is my Fear? — If ye offer the blind for Sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and ſick, is it not evil? — I have no pleaſure in you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, neither will I accept an Offering at your hands.* And then it follows in the words of the Text, *For from the riſing of the Sun, even unto the going down of the ſame, my Name ſhall be great among the* Gentiles. The Threatning contained in This expoſtulation, is exactly the ſame with that of our Saviour in the Goſpel; *The Kingdom of God ſhall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof.* The Accompliſhment of which Threatning upon the people of the *Jews*, both for the unparallelled manner of its execution, and for the unexampled length of the time of its continuance, has been ſo conſpicuous; that now, near ſeventeen hundred years after the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, they remain at this very day a living and ocular demonſtration of the Truth of all the antient Prophecies which concern their State. But SERM. LXXIII.

2*dly*; The Text contains a particular *Promiſe* in relation to the *Gentiles*; joined with a general Declaration concerning the State and Condition of the *Univerſal Church* in the future and latter Ages of the World: *In every place, Incenſe ſhall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; For my Name ſhall be Great among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Notwithſtanding That ſtrong and ſettled Prejudice among the *Jews*, of which we find great Remains even among our Saviour's own Diſciples, that That Nation was always to be the Alone peculiar people of God; yet we find in the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament many very clear intimations, like This in the Text, that, in the days of the Meſſiah, the Favour of God ſhould be extended to the *Gentiles*, and his Knowledge ſpread among the Nations of the Earth; *Iſ.* lx. 3; *The Gentiles ſhall come to thy Light, and Kings to the brightneſs of thy Riſing*: And ch. xlix. 6; *It is a light thing that thou ſhouldeſt be my Servant to raiſe up the Tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of Iſrael; I will alſo give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my Salvation unto the Ends of the Earth.* Theſe Prophecies plainly *began* to be fulfilled, at the time when the Apoſtles were commanded to preach the Goſpel to the *Gentiles* as well as to the *Jews*; and the *full accompliſhment* of them will then take place, when the ſame everlaſting Goſpel ſhall either effectually prevail, or at leaſt ſhall have been preached and tendered in its purity, among all Nations. *In every place, Incenſe ſhall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering. Incenſe*, (which is the *Prayers of the Saints*; Rev. v. 8.) and this phraſe, *a pure Offering*, are plainly intended to expreſs That *ſpiritual Religion*, That *Worſhip of the Father in Spirit and Truth* according to the Goſpel of *Chriſt*, which is oppoſed to the *carnal Ordinances* and *literal Sacrifices* of the *Jews*, and of which thoſe Sacrifices and external Purifications were but Types and Figures. Hence the Chriſtian Worſhip, the Worſhip of of God *out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned*; is elegantly ſtiled a *Spiritual* Sacrifice; 1 *Pet.* ii. 5: *the* Sacrifice *of Praiſe to God continually*; Heb. xiii. 15: *the preſenting* ourſelves *a living* Sacrifice, *holy, acceptable to God, which is our reaſonable Service*; Rom. xii. 1. The Metaphor is exactly of the ſame ſort, as That whereby Chriſtians are called *The* true *circumciſion*, the *circumciſion made without hands*; as being *That* in *reality*, in the *true and ſpiritual Effect*, of which the *circumciſion in the fleſh made with hands* was but a *ſhadow* or figurative Repreſentation. For *circumciſion*, ſays the Apoſtle, Rom. ii. 28, *is not That which is outward in the fleſh; but — circumciſion is That of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God.* The *character* therefore of the *Chriſtian* Worſhip, ſet forth in the Text under the prophetick figures of *Incenſe* and a *Pure Offering*, is, that it conſiſts in what St. *Paul* calls *Lifting up Holy hands*, 1 Tim. ii. 8, *without Wrath and Doubting*; It conſiſts in approaching God, not with the Sacrifices of *Beaſts*, or Offerings of the *Fruits of the Earth*; but with the offering up of *Ourſelves* to his Service, in all holineſs and righteouſneſs of Life; Approaching him with *Minds* duly ſenſible of the inexpreſſible

SERM. LXXIII.

preſſible Excellency of the Divine Majeſty, with *Hands* clear from all iniquity and unjuſt Practices, with *Hearts* free from all Impurity and Moral Turpitude. This is the *Pure Offering*, truly acceptable unto God: And This, he foretels by the Prophet, ſhall in due time be offered unto his Name *in* every *place, from the riſing of the Sun, even unto the going down of the ſame; for my Name ſhall be great among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* The *Promiſe* is indeed here made *particularly* to the *Gentiles*: But from ſeveral other paſſages of Scripture, parallel to This, there ſeems reaſon to expect that God's *Antient people* alſo ſhall be converted, when once the fulneſs of the *Gentiles* is come in; *Iſ.* xlix. 22; and xi. 12; and lx. 10; *Thus ſaith the Lord God; Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and ſet up my ſtandard to the Nations; and they ſhall bring thy Sons in their arms, and their Daughters ſhall be carried upon their ſhoulders. And he ſhall ſet up an enſign for the Nations, and ſhall aſſemble the Outcaſts of Iſrael, and gather together the diſperſed of Judah from the four Corners of the Earth. And the Sons of Strangers ſhall build up thy Walls, and their Kings ſhall miniſter unto thee; For in my wrath I ſmote thee, but in my Favour have I had mercy on thee.* Our Saviour himſelf predicts ſomething of the ſame nature; *Luke* xxi. 24; *Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles,* till *the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* And St. *Paul* ſeems to intimate the *ſame* thing; *Rom.* xi. 25; *Blindneſs in part is happened to Iſrael,* until *the Fulneſs of the Gentiles be come in.* After which Great Event, the Scripture is full of very Sublime Deſcriptions of a State of extraordinary Happineſs to enſue; *Iſ.* xi. 6; and lx. 18; *The Wolf alſo ſhall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard ſhall lie down with the Kid;* —— *and a little child ſhall lead them. They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my Holy Mountain; for the Earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea*: And —— *thou ſhalt call thy Walls Salvation, and thy Gates Praiſe*: —— *Thy people alſo ſhall be All righteous, they ſhall inherit the Land for ever.*

Whatever be the true Meaning of Theſe and the like Prophecies: Whether there be a time ſtill to come, wherein they ſhall be accompliſhed literally; Or whether they are intended only to expreſs the natural and genuine *Tendency* of the univerſal and ſincere Practice of Chriſtianity in the *preſent* World, and the *real Effect* which ſhall be obtained by it in the World *to come*: Whatever, I ſay, be the ſtrict and literal Meaning of theſe Prophecies; it becomes not *Us* to be too curious and inquiſitive after the particular *Times and Seaſons which the Father has put in his own Power*; But in *general*, the *Uſes* we are to make of all theſe Predictions, are very obvious. In the

1ſt place, It is *Our* Duty, in our whole Behaviour and Practice, to promote, as much as in *Us* lies, the Knowledge of God, and the Intereſt of True Virtue and Righteouſneſs amongſt Men. This is contributing *Our* Part, towards the introducing That happy State and Conſtitution of things, which is the Accompliſhment of the fore-mentioned Prophecies. And when we have thus done our *Own* Duty, we are then to remember the Admonition of our Saviour, *Luke* xxi. 19; *In your patience poſſeſs ye your Souls*; and rely upon the Providence of *God*, to accompliſh the Great Events which he has promiſed, in his own *Manner* and at his own *Time*. In matters of *This* nature, which have not a conditional dependence upon the Behaviour of *ſingle* perſons, but relate to the *General* Scheme of Providence in the Government of the World; In *Theſe* things, I ſay, *the Gifts and Calling of God are without Repentance*; Rom. xi. 29. The Promiſes of God will certainly be accompliſhed, and his Purpoſe ſhall not fail. But becauſe it is not for *Us* to know beforehand, the exact *Times and Seaſons* which God has appointed; the Duty therefore of every particular Chriſtian, whatever be the Circumſtances of Time and Place in which Providence has fixed him, is to take care that He himſelf be in the Number of thoſe, who, *in all Holy converſation and godlineſs, look for, and haſte unto, the Coming of the day of God*; 2 Pet. iii. 12.

2dly, Another Inference ariſing from the conſideration of ſuch Predictions as This in the Text, is, that we may hence learn to *juſtify* to ourſelves the various Methods, in which the Wiſdom of God has choſen at divers times to reveal itſelf to the World. With regard to *ſingle perſons*, to whom Providence has given very different *natural capacities*, or different *Means and Opportunities of Knowledge*, or different Manners of *Revelation*, the divine Juſtice and Equity conſiſts in judging them finally

finally according to their reſpective Abilities, accepting every one *according to what he has, and not according to what he has not.* With regard to *Whole Nations*, the juſtification of the Divine Wiſdom, is his ſo doing what he pleaſes with his own, as, through a Succeſſion of various and great Events, to accompliſh *General Deſigns* of Mercy and Goodneſs. Of This, St. *Paul* has given us an admirable Inſtance, in his account of God's ſetting up firſt the Nation of the *Jews*, and afterwards the Churches of the Chriſtian *Gentiles*, to be the Standard of true Religion to the World; intending to finiſh the whole Diſpenſation, by having Mercy upon Both; *Rom.* xi. 30; *For as* ye (Gentiles) *in times paſt have not believed God, yet have Now obtained Mercy through* Their (the *Jews*) *Unbelief: Even ſo have* Theſe *alſo now not believed, that through* your *mercy* They *alſo may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them All in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon All. O the depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out!* SERM. LXXIII.

3*dly*, and *Laſtly*, The *Laſt* Inference I ſhall draw from what has been ſaid, is This. In the words *before* my Text, the reaſon given of God's rejecting the *Jews*, is the unworthy manner in which they had behaved themſelves, while unto them were committed the Oracles of God. In the *Text itſelf*, the acceptableneſs of the *converted Gentiles* unto God, is expreſſed by their offering up unto his Name a *Pure Offering*. Which *Pure Offering*, denotes the *Holineſs* and *real Purity* of the *Goſpel-diſpenſation*, in oppoſition to the *external Ceremonies* of the *Jewiſh Law*. If therefore *We*, under the *greater Light* of the *Everlaſting Goſpel*, ſtill live *viciouſly* and *corruptly*, as the *Jews* did under thoſe *carnal Ordinances*; how much *more ſevere* Judgments ſhall we have reaſon to expect, than what fell even upon That People! For (as St. *Paul* excellently argues, *Rom.* xi. 20;) *Becauſe of Unbelief* They *were broken off, and* Thou *ſtandeſt by Faith: Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God ſpared not the natural Branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not Thee.*

SERMON LXXIV.

The Doctrines of Religion reasonable to be believed.

(A Passion-Sermon.)

MATT. xii. 39, 40.

An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a Sign, and there shall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the Heart of the Earth.

SERM. LXXIV.

WHEN our Saviour first preached to the *Jews* the Gospel of the Kingdom, he proved to them his divine Commission and the Truth of his Doctrine, not only from the *Prophecies* of the Old Testament, from the things written in the Law, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him; but also by the *mighty Works* which he himself performed, as direct and immediate Evidences of his being the Promised Messiah. The *Doctrine* he

he taught, being a Doctrine of Purity and Great Holineſs, abſolutely requiring a Reformation of Manners, and ſuch an effectual Amendment of Life, as muſt ſhow forth itſelf in the real and habitual Practice of true Virtue and Righteouſneſs; *This Doctrine* was therefore extremely diſagreeable to the *Phariſees* and Chief men among the *Jews*, who were perſons of a haughty and tyrannical Spirit, covetous and ambitious, and, in order to ſerve the Purpoſes of temporal Power and ſpiritual Pride, infinitely zealous of all the external Forms and Ceremonials of Religion. For This reaſon, they hated, above all things the Spirit with which our Saviour taught; the Spirit of Meekneſs and Humility, the Spirit of Goodneſs and Equity, the Spirit of Love and univerſal Charity. And accordingly they ſet themſelves, upon all occaſions, to revile his Doctrine and calumniate his perſon. In which matter, it was no great difficulty for them to meet with Succeſs; becauſe the prejudiced Vulgar, who could very hardly diſtinguiſh between the *Traditions of their Elders* and the *Commands of God*, muſt needs be prone to look upon our Lord as an Enemy to the *One*, becauſe he preached againſt the *Other*. But the *Miracles* which our Saviour worked, were *harder* to withſtand: For the people could not eaſily be perſwaded, that God would give a *Deceiver* Power to perform as *mighty Works*, as thoſe by which the Law of *Moſes* had itſelf been at firſt eſtabliſhed. Here therefore the malice of the *Phariſees*, was to exert itſelf in a more extraordinary manner. And when they could not deny the *miraculous Facts themſelves*, they pretended that the *Power* which worked them was the Power of Satan: Ver. 24th *of this chapter*, They ſaid, *he doth not caſt out Devils, but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*. And whenſoever he taught, *without* working ſome immediate Miracle; *then* they preſently called upon him again, to ſhow them a *Sign*: Ver. 38; *Then certain of the Scribes and Phariſees anſwered, ſaying, Maſter, we would ſee a* Sign *from thee*. Thus againſt wilful perverſeneſs there is No remedy. If he ſpake to them with ſo much *reaſon* and *goodneſs*, as *never man ſpake*; ſtill his Doctrines wanted to be confirmed by a *Miracle*. And if he confirmed what he taught, by undeniable *Miracles*; then the *Power* which worked them, was the *Power of Satan*. For This reaſon, to the *Phariſees* who called upon him to ſhow them a Sign, he gave this ſevere Reply in the words of the Text; *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign, and there ſhall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, ſo ſhall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth*. The declaration here made by our Lord, is of the ſame nature with That in the Prophet *Iſaiah*; ch. vii. 13; *Hear ye now, O houſe of David; Is it a ſmall thing for you to weary Men, but will ye weary my God alſo? Therefore the Lord himſelf ſhall give you a Sign; Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive and bear a Son, and ſhall call his Name Immanuel*. The *Jews* in *Iſaiah*'s time, like the *Phariſees* in our *Saviour*'s, after all the mighty works that God had done for them, ſtill continued *impenitent*: And as often as they were called upon to repent, they preſumptuouſly demanded *more Signs*. In way of Reproof for this Perverſeneſs of theirs, and as a ſtanding Declaration of God's having done, on *His* part, what was fit for *Him* to do; The Divine Wiſdom, both in the days of *Iſaiah*, and in the days of *Chriſt*, refers ſuch perſons to the *ſettled* and *univerſal* Evidence of Revelation; *viz. the miraculous Fulfilling* of the *Antient Prophecies* concerning the *promiſed Meſſias*. The Sign referred to by *Iſaiah*, is the Birth *of Chriſt*; *Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive*. That referred to by our Saviour in the Text, is his Reſurrection; *The Son of man ſhall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*.

SERM. LXXIV.

There is in theſe words *one* Difficulty; how our Lord is here ſaid to have been *three days and three nights* in the heart of the Earth, when in the Hiſtory of all the Goſpels it appears that having been buried the *firſt* day in the *evening*, and riſing again the *third* day in the *morning*, he conſequently remained in the Sepulchre but *two* whole nights, and *one* whole day. Now in order to underſtand this rightly, it is to be obſerved that the *Jews* in *Their* language, as *We* alſo frequently do in *Ours*, by the word, (*day*) mean the Space of *twenty four hours*. And in *all languages* Nothing is more common, than for the Name of the *Whole* to be made uſe of to expreſs a *Part*. Whatever therefore is *begun* on the *firſt* day, and *finiſhed* on the *third*, may in uſual and vulgar Speech (which is always the language the Scripture

SERM. LXXIV.

ture ſpeaks in) be rightly ſaid to be *three days* in doing. But *This* may perhaps ſeem a matter of *ſmaller* importance; Though, indeed, it can never be without its Uſe, to ſhow the conſiſtency of ſuch Texts of Scripture, as at firſt ſight may appear not to agree together.

Another Inquiry therefore, naturally ariſing upon theſe words, is, for *what reaſon* our Saviour continued in the Sepulchre juſt ſuch a *determinate time* before his Reſurrection. Now, beſides that This was neceſſary for the *fulfilling of the Prophecies* that went before concerning him, (which is the reaſon alledged in the Text;) it was moreover neceſſary in the *nature of the thing itſelf*, that he ſhould continue ſo long *a time* in the grave, to ſhow that he was *really dead*; and he was to continue there *no longer*, that (as the Scripture expreſſes it) *the Holy One might not ſee corruption.*

The words of the Text being thus explained; the matter of inſtruction therein contained, may be reduced to the following Heads.

1*ſt*, That the Doctrine of religion is in itſelf reaſonable to be believed, and ſufficiently evidenced by the *ſtanding* and *univerſal Signs* or *Marks* of Truth. It is *ſuppoſed* in the words, that, what our Saviour here calls the *Sign of the Prophet Jonas*, was ſufficient to render That generation of the *Jews* inexcuſable in their Unbelief.

2*dly*, Here is a Deſcription given of wicked men, in one particular and remarkable part of their character; that they are apt continually to require *more* and *more* Signs, and to tempt God without reaſon and without end. *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign.*

3*dly*, The declaration our Saviour here makes, plainly implies, that there are juſt and good reaſons, why God ſhould not gratify the unreaſonable expectations of prejudiced and corrupt Minds. *There ſhall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.*

1*ſt*, The Doctrine of Religion is in itſelf reaſonable to be believed, and ſufficiently evidenced by the *ſtanding* and *univerſal Signs* or *Marks* of Truth: 'Tis *ſuppoſed* in the words, that what our Saviour here calls the *Sign of the Prophet Jonas*, was ſufficient to render That generation of the *Jews* inexcuſable in their Unbelief.

Religion is *in its Nature* a Trial or Probation of men's Hearts: and is therefore eſſentially inconſiſtent with all compulſive Motives, with *ſuch* Motives as deſtroy the nature of a Trial or Probation; *Deut.* viii. 2; *The Lord thy God led thee theſe forty years in the Wilderneſs,—to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldſt keep his Commandments or no.* The Meaning is, not that God wants any information with regard to *Himſelf*: But he puts men in a probation-ſtate, in order to their *Own* Benefit; that by virtuous *Actions* they may obtain an *habitual* Love of Virtue; and by labouring in the rational *Search* after *Truth*, and perſevering patiently in the *Practice* of *Right*, they may be *purified and made white and tried*; Dan. xii. 10. For, as the Apoſtle St. *James* expreſſes it, *the Trying of our Faith worketh Patience*; ch. i. 3. God could, if he pleaſed, *even out of the ſtones of the Street, raiſe up children unto Abraham*; or irreſiſtibly compel the moſt obdurate Sinner to obey his Commandments. But This, is not dealing with *Them* as *rational Agents*; nor could ſuch an Obedience be any more acceptable to *Him*, than the abſolute Subjection of the *material* World to his Omnipotent Will, gives *irrational* Beings any Title to the Eſteem and Character of Moral Goodneſs or Virtue. Were God by his Almighty Power to over-rule and prevent all poſſibility of Diſobedience or Moral Evil, as ſome Men fancy it would be glorious for him to do; it would indeed have the contrary effect, and deprive him of the Glory of all his Moral Attributes. For though he would ſtill continue to be a Mighty Creator and All-Powerful Lord, yet he could in no ſenſe be a *Moral Governour* or *Judge* of the World, nor have Any Exerciſe of his Moral Perfections. All Religion or Virtue, conſiſts in the Love of Truth, and in the Free Choice and Practice of Right, and in being influenced regularly by rational and moral Motives. By *Theſe* things therefore God tries or proves men's Obedience; and under various Circumſtances, and by various Methods of manifeſting himſelf to them, he exerciſes their Faith and Patience and Virtue. By in-

duing

duing men originally with *Reaſon and Underſtanding*, with a *natural Knowledge* of Good and Evil, and a *Conſcience* of the difference betwixt Virtue and Vice; By the Witneſs that God bears to himſelf in the Works of *Nature*, and by the various Diſpenſations of his All-wiſe *Providence*; in which *Viſible Effects*, the Power and Government of the *Inviſible God* are clearly and continually ſeen, *ſo that they*, who attend not to them, *are without excuſe*: By *theſe* things, does God perpetually call men to religion; and hold out unto them an *univerſal Light*, in *all* Places and at *all* Times. And had men *no other* Diſcovery of the Will of God, than *This*; yet their chooſing to depart from the *natural* Law of *everlaſting Righteouſneſs*, would juſtly denominate them *an evil and adulterous generation* of Mankind. But *beſides* this Voice of *Nature* in the viſible works of God, and in the mind and conſcience of every particular perſon; the divine Providence has moreover, in compaſſion to the ignorance of the Weak, and *for a Teſtimony* againſt the perverſe and corrupt, in almoſt every Age of the World, raiſed up Eminent *Preachers of Righteouſneſs*; ſuch as was *Enoch before*, and *Noah at* the time of the Flood, and *Job* and the *Patriarchs after* it; to excite and call men to the practice of their Duty. And to the Nation of the *Jews*, he gave a *ſtanding Revelation* of his Will; inviting them continually to Repentance by his Meſſengers *the Prophets*, and at laſt by his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, their promiſed and long expected Meſſiah: Manifeſting his manifold Wiſdom, *at ſundry times and in diverſe manners* of Revelation; as he had before done in the *various diſtribution* of the Natural *Talents* of men's *rational Faculties, Capacities, and Abilities*; intending finally to judge *All* his Servants, *according to what* every one in particular *has, and not according to what he has not*: And in each of theſe various Diſpenſations, given ſuch degrees of *evidence and teſtimony* to the Truth, as it might be a proper Tryal of good and well-diſpoſed Minds, neither credulous *beyond* reaſon, nor prejudiced *againſt* reaſon, but prepared always to *receive* the Truth, and to *obey* it. Thus, to That generation of the *Jews* who lived in our Saviour's time, the proper and ſufficient evidence of our Lord's being the promiſed Meſſias, to all ſuch as impartially ſearched the Scriptures, was the fulfilling of the Prophecies that went before concerning him, and particularly That moſt miraculous One of his Reſurrection from the Dead. Which was a *Sign* not poſſible to be reſiſted by Any, but by a very corrupt and *adulterous generation*; by a generation of *ſuch* men, of ſuch *perverſe and incorrigible* Sinners, the deſcription of whom, (which was the

2*d* Particular I obſerved in the Text,) the *deſcription* of them, in one *remarkable* part of their character, is, that they are apt continually to require *more* and *more* Signs, and to tempt God without reaſon and without end: *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign.* The wickedeſt of men cannot bear the Thoughts of fighting openly againſt God; and therefore, to give ſome degree of Eaſe to their Minds, they generally take great pains to impoſe upon themſelves, with ſome ſlight objections either againſt the *Being of God*, or againſt the *evidence of his Laws and Commands*. *The Jews*, ſays St. *Paul*, *require a Sign, and the Gentiles ſeek after Wiſdom*; 1 Cor. i. 22. The humour of the *Gentile* World, was to value themſelves upon their *Logick and Philoſophy*; and therefore the corrupt part of *Them* could always reject *any* religious Truth, by drawing objections againſt it from the *received Maxims of their Schools*. The *Jewiſh* nation valued themſelves upon the *miraculous* things, which God had done for their Fathers; and therefore the corrupt part of *Them*, could always reject *any* religious Truth, by continually requiring *more* and *greater Miracles* to be worked in confirmation of it. Of This, the behaviour of That people in the *Wilderneſs* is a remarkable and very marvellous Inſtance. By a continued ſeries of Miracles, God had reſcued them from *Egyptian* Slavery and Idolatry, and was guiding them in the Wilderneſs like a Flock, to the poſſeſſion of the good land which he had promiſed to their Fathers. *Marvellous things* (as the Pſalmiſt repreſents this matter in a moſt elegant and affectionate deſcription, *Pſ.* lxxviii. 13;) *Marvellous things did he in the ſight of our forefathers, in the land of Egypt, even in the field of Zoan. He divided the Sea, and let them go through; he made the waters to ſtand on a heap. In the day-time alſo he led them with a cloud; and all the night through, with a light of fire. He clave the hard rocks in the wilderneſs, and gave them drink thereof, as it had been out of the*

SERM. LXXIV.

great depth. He brought waters out of the ſtony rock, ſo that it guſhed out like the Rivers. Further, ver. 24; *He commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven. He rained down manna alſo upon them for to eat, and gave them food from heaven. So man did eat Angels food, for he ſent them meat enough. He cauſed the eaſt wind to blow under heaven, and thro' his power he brought in the ſouth-weſt wind. He rained fleſh upon them as thick as duſt, and feathered fowls like as the ſands of the Sea. He let it fall among their tents, even round about their habitation.* And again, ver. 53; *He led them forth like ſheep, and carried them in the wilderneſs like a flock. He brought them out ſafely, that they ſhould not fear; and overwhelmed their enemies with the Sea. He brought them within the borders of his ſanctuary, even to his mountain which he purchaſed with his right hand. He caſt out the Heathen alſo before them; cauſed their land to be divided among them for an heritage, and made the tribes of Iſrael to dwell in their tents.* Sufficient *Signs* Theſe, any unprejudiced perſon would judge, to convince even the moſt obſtinate and perverſe, the moſt *evil and adulterous generation.* But ſo *familiar* were theſe *Marvels* become to them, that (it appears) they had no more influence upon *Them*, to bring them to true Amendment and Reformation of Manners, than the Works of *Nature*, which are in Truth the continual miraculous operations of the omnipotent Power of the *God* of Nature,) have upon *Us*. This alſo is moſt *pathetically* ſet forth in the ſame lxxviiith *Pſalm*; ver. 18; *Yet for all this they ſinned more againſt him, and provoked the moſt Higheſt in the Wilderneſs: They tempted God in their hearts, and required meat for their Luſt. They ſpake againſt God alſo, ſaying, ſhall God prepare a Table in the Wilderneſs? He ſmote the ſtony Rock indeed, that the waters guſhed out, and the ſtreams flowed withal; but can he give Bread alſo, or provide fleſh for his people?* (Their Argument was exactly the ſame, as that of the *Phariſees* to whom our Lord replies in my Text: They acknowledged that he had healed many diſeaſed Perſons here upon *Earth*; But could he ſhow them *alſo a Sign from Heaven?*) Further, ver. 32. of the ſame Pſalm, *For all this they have ſinned yet more, and believed not his wondrous works*: v. 11; *They kept not the Covenant of God, and would not walk in his Law; But forgat what he had done, and the wonderful Works that he hath ſhowed for them*; v. 42; *They turned back and tempted God, and moved the Holy One in Iſrael: They thought not of his Hand, and of the day when he delivered them from the Hand of the Enemy; How he had wrought his Miracles in Egypt, and his Wonders in the field of Zoan.* And again, v. 27; *They tempted and diſpleaſed the moſt High God, and kept not his Teſtimonies; But turned their Backs, and fell away like their forefathers, ſtarting aſide like a broken Bow. For they grieved him with their hill-altars, and provoked him to diſpleaſure with their Images.* A more lively and affectionate deſcription of the perverſeneſs of incorrigible Sinners, cannot poſſibly be given. Other Accounts of the ſame nature, we find in the hiſtory which the Old Teſtament gives us of the Behaviour of That people. When the *Egyptians* purſued after them into the Wilderneſs; *then*, as if he who had brought them out of *Egypt* with a mighty hand was not able to protect them in their journey; they ſaid, *Wherefore haſt thou thus dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?* Exod xiv. 11. When the *Egyptians* were all deſtroyed, and they had nothing to oppoſe their progreſs but the ſolitary Wilderneſs; *then*, as if he who had delivered them from the Hoſt of *Pharaoh*, was not able to feed them in the Deſart, they ſaid, *Ye have brought us forth into this Wilderneſs to kill this whole Aſſembly with hunger*; Exod. xvi. 3. When God miraculouſly ſupplied them with Bread from Heaven; *then*, there was *nothing at all beſides this Manna*; Num. xi. 6: And when, by *another* miracle, he had quenched their Thirſt; *then*, he *ſmote the ſtony rock indeed, that the waters guſhed out; but can he provide* Fleſh *alſo for his People?* Pſ. lxxviii. 21. And when, by a *third* miracle, he fed them to the full with quails; *for all* This, *they ſinned yet more, and believed not his wondrous works*; ver. 32. When *Moſes* tarried longer in the Mount than They expected; *then*, they could not live without their Leader, but muſt *make Gods to go before* them; *for, as for this Moſes*, they knew *not what was become of him*; Exod. xxxii. 1: When he continued with them, and put himſelf conſtantly at the Head of them; *then*, ye *take too much upon you; wherefore lift ye up yourſelves above the congregation of the Lord?* Numb. xvi. 3. When God commanded them to go up, and take poſſeſſion of the good Land which he had provided

for

for them; *then the people of* the *land* were *ſtrong*, and *the Cities walled*, and *the children of Anak there*, and *we be not able to go up againſt the people*, and *the land is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof*, and *we ſaw Giants there*, and *would God we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this Wilderneſs*; and *wherefore has the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the ſword?* Num. xiii. 28, &c. But when the Lord hereupon commanded them not *to go up*; *then, Lo, we be here, and* will *go up unto the place which the Lord has promiſed*; ch. xiv. 40. SERM. LXXIV.

I ſhould *proceed* to *Other* Inſtances of the unreaſonable behaviour of ſinful Men in this reſpect: But the time not permitting me to finiſh this Subject now, I ſhall at preſent add only a word of *application*, and ſo conclude.

I believe there are very few perſons, who read theſe portions of Scripture, without cenſuring in their own minds the behaviour of the *Jews*, and ſaying within themſelves, as did thoſe whom our Saviour deſcribes; *Mat.* xxiii. 30. *If We had been in the days of our Fathers, we would not have been partakers with them* in Theſe things. But to every impenitent Sinner, in the *preſent*, as well as in *former* times, the experience of the World, and the reaſon of things, and the judgment of conſcience, and the Scripture of Truth ſays, *Thou art the man.* For all theſe things are *examples* unto *Us*, *and they are written for* our *admonition, upon whom the ends of the World are come.* God calls *Us* to Repentance, by the continual Witneſs which he gives to himſelf in the Works of Creation, in the Reaſon and Nature of Things, in the eſſential Differences of Good and Evil, in the voice of Conſcience, in the diſpenſations of Providence, in his Mercies and Judgments, in the completion of Prophecies, in the Works and Preaching of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, in the Promiſes and Threatnings of the Goſpel. And if all *Theſe* things move men not, the Scripture declares *there ſhall no Sign be given to* us, but the *Sign* of the Nations who were deſtroyed by the *Flood*, and the Cities who periſhed in the overthrow of *Sodom*. For as in the days before the *Flood*, and before the deſtruction of *Sodom*, men were *eating and drinking*, and *knew not* until the Waters came and *took away* the one, and the Fire the other; *ſo alſo*, ſays our Lord, *ſhall the Coming of the Son of Man be.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXV.

Unreaſonable Expectations not to be gratified in Religion.

[*A Paſſion-Sermon.*]

MATT. xii. 39.

An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign, and there ſhall No Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.

SERM. LXXV.

GOD, who is the Supreme Governor of the Univerſe, ſhows forth his infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, in creating a Variety of rational Creatures in different Circumſtances, and expecting from them a proportionable Uſe of the Talents committed to them, according to their different degrees of Light and Knowledge, and according to their reſpective Capacities and Abilities. To *Angels*, having given Knowledge and Powers far ſuperior to thoſe of Men; he expects of them accordingly an *Angelical* Obedience. To *Men*, having diſpenſed various Talents and various Degrees of Knowledge, at ſundry times and in divers manners, according

cording to his own good pleaſure; after the ſimilitude of the Great King in our Saviour's Parable, who, in the diſtribution of Employments among his Servants, without injury to any one, did what he pleaſed with his own: To *Men*, I ſay, God having diſpenſed various Talents and various degrees of Knowledge, he expects of them a Return proportionable to what is given them; Not over-ruling their Actions by the Force and Power of an irreſiſtible Light; but trying their Obedience by the Willingneſs of their Endeavours to ſeek after Knowledge, and to guide themſelves by That degree of Light (whatſoever it be) whereby his Will is in any meaſure made known unto them. SERM. LXXV.

In the State of *Nature*, God made himſelf known to Men by the Arguments of Reaſon, by the Works of Creation, and by the diſpenſations of Providence; *having never left himſelf wholly without witneſs, but ſending* men *rain and fruitful Seaſons, and filling their Hearts with Food and Gladneſs*; the *inviſible things of God from the creation of the World being clearly ſeen and underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead*; Rom. i. 20. If the *Nations of the World*, forſaking *this Univerſal Light*, fall into the abſurdeſt and moſt unreaſonable Idolatries, and into conſequently vicious and corrupt Practices of all kinds; *they are* evidently (as St. *Paul* declares) *without Excuſe*; and there is no injuſtice with God, if to ſuch *evil and adulterous generations* of men there be *no other Sign given*, but the *Signs* of *Nature* and *Reaſon* and *Conſcience*, and the perpetual univerſal *Works* of *God*.

Under the *Goſpel*, God has made himſelf known to Men by the Revelation of his *Son*, confirmed by Signs and Wonders and *Miracles* of the *Holy Ghoſt*, by the Completion of *Prophecies*, and by the Analogy of the *Whole Series* of *Events* from the Beginning of the World. If under this *greater* and *clearer light of Revelation*, men ſtill continue impenitent; not bringing forth the ſuitable Fruits of Righteouſneſs, nor living *worthy of their holy vocation*, and as *becometh* the *Goſpel of Chriſt*; *the wrath of God* is more ſeverely *revealed from Heaven, againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of* Such *men*; and there ſhall *no* further *Sign be given to* ſuch *an evil and adulterous generation, but* the Sign *of the Son of man coming with the clouds of Heaven, in flame of fire taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel*.

Under the *Jewiſh* ſtate, God manifeſted himſelf to That People by the Law of *Moſes*, by the continual Preaching of the *Prophets*, and finally by the accompliſhment of the whole diſpenſation in the *Life and Death and Reſurrection of Chriſt*. And when they who ſaw *Theſe* manifeſtations of God, were not thereby prevailed upon to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*, and anſwerable to the *Light* that was then *come into the World*; but, on the contrary, *cavilled* at our Lord's Doctrine and Miracles, and continually required *More* Signs; our Lord, with juſt indignation, gives them the Reply in the Text; *An evil and an adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign, and there ſhall No Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the Whale's Belly, ſo ſhall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the Heart of the Earth*.

In diſcourſing upon which words, I have before obſerved, that the matter of inſtruction therein contained, may be reduced to the following Heads.

1*ſt*, That the Doctrine of Religion is in itſelf reaſonable to be believed, and ſufficiently evidenced by the *ſtanding* and *univerſal Signs* or *Marks of Truth*. It is *ſuppoſed* in the words, that, what our Saviour here calls the *Sign of the Prophet Jonas*, was ſufficient to render That generation of the *Jews* inexcuſable in their Unbelief:

SERM. LXXV.

2*dly*; Here is a deſcription given of wicked men, in one particular and remarkable part of their Character; that they are apt continually to require *more* and *more* Signs, and to tempt God without reaſon and without End. *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign.*

3*dly*; The declaration our Saviour here makes, plainly implies, that there are juſt and good reaſons, why God ſhould not gratify the unreaſonable expectations of prejudiced and corrupt Minds. *There ſhall No Sign be given to it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.*

The *Firſt* of theſe, I have already gone through; and have ſhown, that the Doctrine of Religion is in itſelf reaſonable to be believed, and ſufficiently evidenced by the *ſtanding* and *univerſal Signs* or *Marks of Truth*. According to our Saviour's Suppoſition in the words of the Text; that, what he here calls the *Sign of the Prophet Jonas*, was ſufficient to render That generation of the *Jews* inexcuſable in their Unbelief.

The *Second* Obſervable, was, the Deſcription here given of wicked men, in one particular and remarkable part of their Character; that they are apt continually to require *more* and *more* Signs, and to tempt God without Reaſon and without End: *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign.* And This Obſervation I at large illuſtrated by That *remarkable Inſtance* the Scripture gives us, of the behaviour of the *people of the Jews* in their paſſage through the *Wilderneſs*, which is ſo diſtinctly recorded in the Books of *Moſes*, and ſo frequently alluded to in the *Pſalms*, and in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles to the *Corinthians* and to the *Hebrews*, as a ſtanding Admonition and Caution to perverſe Minds, in all ſucceeding generations.

I ſhall *Now* proceed to ſome *Other* Inſtances of the like Sort, in which the Unreaſonableneſs of tempting God in this manner, will ſtill further appear. In our *Saviour's time*, the *ſame* Spirit of Perverſeneſs, which the Scripture calls an *evil heart of Unbelief*, (meaning always by *Unbelief*, not a *reaſonable Caution* in *with-holding the Aſſent*, but a *captious Deſire* of *evading the reaſons of conviction*;) In our *Saviour's time*, I ſay, the *ſame* perverſe Spirit, which appeared ſo remarkably in the *Jews of old* in the Wilderneſs, continued *ſtill* in the corrupt part of That Nation: So that *whatever* Method the divine Wiſdom thought fit to make uſe of in order to bring them to Repentance; they could *Always* render it ineffectual. *John the Baptiſt came* unto them, *neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine*; Luke vii. 33; that is, *he* came in the more *ſevere* way of *auſterity and mortification*; and they *ſaid*, *He hath a Devil*; that is, they *charged* him with being *enthuſiaſtick and mad*. On the other hand, *the Son of man is come eating and drinking*; ver. 34; that is, in the more *familiar* way of a free converſation; and they *ſaid*, *Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and Sinners*. The Methods of Proceeding were *Both* of them right, in their proper Time and Place; and *Wiſdom is juſtified of all her children*; But incorrigible men could equally find Objections againſt *Both*. Our Saviour therefore, in a moſt elegant parable, compares them to croſs and perverſe children, whom neither Mirth nor Seriouſneſs could pleaſe: Ver. 31; *Whereunto ſhall I liken the men of This generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children ſitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and ſaying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.* When the men of *Nazareth* heard what mighty works our Lord had done at *Capernaum*, they ſaid, *Whatſoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do alſo here in thy* own *Country*; Luk. iv. 23. On the other hand, when he did Wonders in his own country, then their Anſwer was, *Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy Diſciples alſo may ſee the works that thou doeſt*; ——— *If thou do theſe things, ſhow thyſelf to the world*; Joh. vii. 3. When our Lord had miraculouſly healed many diſeaſed perſons here upon *Earth*, then the *Phariſees* ſaid unto him, *Maſter, we would ſee of thee a Sign from*

from Heaven: And when there came unto him a *voice from* Heaven, Joh. xii. 28; the Evangeliſt tells us, ver. 37. that *yet they believed not on him.* When the Chief Prieſts and Elders ſaw our Saviour crucified, they ſaid, *Matt.* xxvii. 42; *He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave; if he be the King of Iſrael, let him now come down from the croſs, and we will believe him*: But when he was riſen from the Dead, to the Terror of their own Soldiers, whom they had ſet to watch him; then they gave them money to report, that *his Diſciples had come by night, and ſtolen him away*; ch. xxviii. 13. Thus, of tempting God; and of continually requiring more and greater Signs, and of finding Means to elude the Arguments and Motives of Religion, there is no End. The *Temper* from which all This proceeds, is of the *ſame* kind with That *Tempting of Providence*, which the Goſpel emphatically repreſents to us in the hiſtory of *our Saviour's temptation*; Where *Satan* placing him upon a *pinnacle of the temple*, argues with him, that, if he was the *Son of God*, he might ſafely venture to *caſt* himſelf *down* from thence: For if God owned and declared him to be his *Son*, and had ſo peculiar a Favour for him; *why* ſhould not he preſerve him from being hurt in his Fall; *Matt.* iv. 6. The Ground upon which incorrigible Sinners reject all the Arguments and Motives of Religion, is generally of *the like* Nature. If it be the *Will* of God, that men ſhould *believe* and *act* in ſuch or ſuch a particular manner; *why* does not he *compel* them ſo to do? *why* does not he perpetually *give them Signs from Heaven? why* does he not *turn their Hearts*, which way ſoever he pleaſes? for *Who has reſiſted his Will?* The Anſwer is very plain; that God does not abſolutely *will* ſuch and ſuch things to be done, but his Will is that men ſhould *chuſe* to do them upon reaſonable Motives: In which alone conſiſts the eſſence of all *Virtue*, and of all *Religion*. God does not therefore by irreſiſtible Motives *compel* men to *obey* him; becauſe, if he did, it would for That very Reaſon be in *Them No* Act of *Obedience*. But he *tries* their Obedience, by the *proper* Inſtruments of *Perſwaſion*; and by Motives ſuited to the nature of *rational* and *free* Agents. Of Theſe, *Some* love the knowledge of *Truth*; and are always ready, according to the degree of Light afforded them, to do what is *Right*: And theſe our Saviour, in his parable of the Sower, very ſignificantly compares to *Good Ground*. *Others* love *Darkneſs rather than Light*, and Arguments of Reaſon make no Impreſſion upon them, and their *Hearts are as hard as the Nether-milſtone*. To *Theſe*, the exquiſite *Works of Nature* prove not the *Being of God*; the *Revelation of the Goſpel*, diſcovers not to them his *Will*: And ſhould God vouchſafe them ſtill *Other Calls* to Repentance, they would prove equally ineffectual; *neither would they be perſwaded*, even *though one roſe from the Dead*. Of This we have a remarkable Inſtance; *Joh.* xii. 9, 10; *Much people* —— *came, not for Jeſus ſake only, but that they might ſee Lazarus alſo, whom he had raiſed from the Dead: But the chief Prieſts conſulted, that they might put Lazarus alſo to Death*. Theſe were, in the ſtrongeſt Senſe of the words in my Text, *an evil and adulterous generation*; altogether unworthy of having any further Signs given them; and whoſe behaviour abundantly juſtifies our Lord's declaration in the following part of the Text, (which was the

SERM. LXXV.

Third and *Laſt* thing I propoſed to ſpeak to; *viz.* the *Declaration* our Saviour here makes,) plainly implying that there are *juſt and good reaſons*, why God ſhould not gratify the unreaſonable expectations of prejudiced and corrupt minds: *There ſhall No Sign be given to this generation, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas*. Now the reaſonableneſs of this Proceeding, is very evident from what has been already ſaid. Eternal Life, is the Gift of God: And the Deſign of God, (his *juſt* and *reaſonable* Deſign,) is to beſtow this *free Gift*, upon thoſe who by an habitual *Practice of Virtue*, ſhall have their Minds qualified for That Happy State. The *Practice of Virtue* conſiſts, in the *willing Choice* of what is *good*, and *avoiding* what is evil: And the *Time* of this Choice, is the *preſent ſtate* of *Probation*. God could, if he had pleaſed, by giving *no free Will* to his Creatures, have prevented *all poſſibility* of *Moral Evil*. But then the whole *Creation of God*, would have been only a great

SERM. LXXV.

great *Machine*; in which the *Omnipotence* indeed of the Maker, would have appeared; but he would have been no *King*, no *Judge*, no *Moral Governor*; nor could have diſplayed *any* of thoſe *more excellent Perfections*, of *Juſtice*, *Mercy*, and the like, in which the *Glory* of the Almighty principally conſiſts. Theſe have *no place*, but where there are *Subjects* capable of *obeying* or *diſobeying*. The *proper Tryal* of which obedience, is That *Freedom of Will*, which, according as it is determined in different Circumſtances by the *reaſonableneſs of what is good* or the *inticements of what is evil*, renders the *Agent* morally *good or evil*. God therefore, according to his own good pleaſure, places men in all variety of Circumſtances in this probation-ſtate; And the Juſtice, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of his Government conſiſts in finally judging them All with Equity, according to their reſpective degrees of Light and Knowledge. The firſt *Root* and *Foundation* of Virtue, is the ſincere Deſire of *knowing* the Will of God, and impartially *ſearching* after the Truth: And, as a proper Tryal of This diſpoſition, the Wiſdom of God has been pleaſed ſo to order the *Notices* given of himſelf to Mankind both by *Nature* and *Revelation*, that *if any man will* do *his Will*, *he ſhall* know *of the doctrine*; and, if he *deſires not* to *practiſe* it, even the *knowledge* of it ſhall be *hid from him*: *To Him that hath, ſhall be given; and from Him that hath not, ſhall be taken away even That which he hath.* By the Light of *Nature*, God manifeſts himſelf to men in the *works of Creation*; Viſibly enough, to thoſe who, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *ſeek the Lord, if haply they may feel after him, and find him:* But yet at the ſame time in *ſuch a manner*, as that vicious and ill-diſpoſed men, *ſeeing*, *may* ſtill *not ſee*; and *hearing*, *may* ſtill *not hear*; but may go on to aſcribe the moſt perfect works of infinite Wiſdom, to *Fate*, to *Chance*, to *Nothing*. By *Revelation*, God has declared his *Mercy* towards Sinners: Signifying unto them, that as a Great King over numerous Nations, conſiſtently with the Laws of his univerſal Kingdom, pardons, in ſome rebellious City, by the interpoſition of his beloved Son, as many as, by his Son's invitation and perſwaſion, return to their Duty; ſo alſo will *God*, the Supreme Governor of the Univerſe, accept all thoſe, whom the Spirit of Chriſt, (inviting them either under the ſtate of *Nature*, by ſuch *Preachers of righteouſneſs* as was *Noah* and the *Patriarchs*; or under the *Law*, by *Moſes* and the *Prophets*; or under the *Goſpel*, by our *Lord himſelf* and his *Apoſtles*,) whom (I ſay) by *Any* of theſe means, the Spirit of Chriſt ſhall bring to Repentance. And the *Evidences* of this *Revelation*, (in the ſame manner, and for the ſame reaſon, as the Evidences of God in the Works of *Creation*,) are fitted to ſatisfy an unprejudiced Mind, and yet are not ſuch as cannot be reſiſted. When the *Jews* demanded of our Saviour *ſuch* a Sign, as was given to their Fathers when the *Heavens* rained down *Manna* for them to eat, *Joh.* vi. 6; he would not gratify them with a *new* miracle, but gave them the true interpretation of the *antient* one: *I* am, ſays he, *the Bread of Life*; *the Bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth Life unto the World.* Again, When the Phariſees asked of him a *Sign from Heaven*; his Anſwer was; *Luke* xii. 56; *Ye hypocrites, ye can diſcern the face of the ſky and of the earth; but how is it, that ye do not diſcern this Time?* referring them to the *Prophecies*, which much more plainly pointed out the *Time* of his Coming, than ever the *face of the Sky* fore-ſignified the Weather. Theſe Prophecies he fulfilled, in is *Life* and by his *Death*; by many miraculous *Actions*, and miraculous *Sufferings*. And when he was *raiſed up the third day*, *God, ſhewed him openly; not to all the people*, Acts x. 41; *but unto Witneſſes choſen before of God*, and *commanded to preach unto the people*: God *here* likewiſe doing, not every thing that *could be* done, not every thing that unreaſonable men might expect *ſhould* be done, but what he himſelf ſaw *fit* and *proper* to be done. According to that affectionate obſervation of our Saviour, *Luke* iv. 25; *I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Iſrael in the days of Elias, but —— unto none of them was he ſent, ſave unto —— a widow of Sarepta: And many Lepers were in Iſrael in the time of Eliſeus the Prophet, and none of them was cleanſed, ſaving Naaman the Syrian.* God has given us Faculties, to enable us to ſearch

Matt. xvi. 1.

after

after and to find the Truth; and he expects we ſhould *attend* with an impartial and unprejudiced mind (which is the proper Duty of Rational Creatures,) to the *Light* he thinks fit to afford us. *Why, even of yourſelves*, ſays our Saviour, *judge ye not what is right*? Luke xii. 57. They who *do* thus judge; who, with a mind deſirous to do the Will of God, receive and embrace the doctrine of Truth; not careleſly, credulouſly, and implicitly; but with reaſon, with examination, with attention, with ſuch impartial conſideration and inquiry, as enables men to find (by obſervation and care) what Others are blind to, and to *be ready* always *to give a reaſon of the Hope that is in them*; Theſe are the perſons, whom the Scripture commends for their *Faith*; for having the Virtue of *Faith*; in oppoſition to the Vice of *Infidelity*, and to the Folly of *Credulity*. For *we walk by Faith, not by Sight*; 2 Cor. v. 7: by a *rational perſwaſion*, not by *Neceſſity*: *Seeing* (as St. *Paul* elegantly deſcribes it; *Seeing*) through *a glaſs* (through a *deſcrying-glaſs*) *darkly*; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; not *beholding*, *as* in *a glaſs* (as in * a *looking-glaſs*,) *with open face*; 2 Cor. iii. 18. And This is That which makes *Faith* and *Hope* to be *Virtues*: For *Hope that is ſeen, is not Hope*; *for, what a man ſeeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for That we ſee not, then do we with patience wait for it*; Rom. viii. 25. The *God of* Nature, in whom *we live and move and have our Being*, and who *is not far from every one of us*, is not *viſible* to mortal eyes: But the Light of Nature affords reaſonable men, very great Arguments to believe and truſt in him; And This, is a commendable and well-grounded Faith. For *Faith is the Subſtance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen*: And the commendation of *Moſes*'s patience in *Egypt*, before God's revealing them himſelf to him, was, that *he indured, as ſeeing him who is inviſible*; Heb. xi. 27. The Evidences of natural reaſon and of the moſt demonſtrable Truths, do not force themſelves upon *All* men; But to the *impartial* and *attentive*, to the *unprejudiced* and *conſiderate*, they appear in their full Strength; and, for That reaſon, 'tis an Act of *Virtue* to be guided by them. For the *ſame* reaſon, in matters of Revelation likewiſe; *Bleſſed*, ſays our Saviour, *are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed*; Joh. xx. 29. That is: Not, they who are *credulous*, and believe *without reaſon*; but they who, like the *Bereans*, are convinced of the Truth by *Searching* into the grounds of it. *The Trial of* whoſe *Faith*, ſaith St. *Peter*, *will be found unto Praiſe and Honour and Glory at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt*: *Whom having not ſeen, ye love*; *in whom, though Now ye ſee him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory*; 1 Pet. i. 7. This is the *character* the Scripture gives us of the Virtue of *Faith*, and the *commendation* of thoſe who are eminent for having it. On the contrary, they who by prejudices and vicious inclinations are prevented from ſearching after the Truth, and, inſtead of attending to and examining what is Right, ſeek rather for Cavils induſtriouſly to evade the evidence and conviction of it; *theſe* are the perſons whom the Scripture with the greateſt ſeverity condemns for their *infidelity*, as being an *evil and adulterous generation*. *The uncircumciſion which is by nature*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *if it fulfil the Law, ſhall it not judge thee, who by the letter and circumciſion doſt tranſgreſs the Law*? Rom. ii. 27. And our Saviour; *The men of Nineveh*, ſays he, *ſhall riſe in judgment with this generation, and ſhall condemn it; becauſe they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here*. Perſons thus *reſiſting* the Truth, our Lord, after the firſt and ſecond admonition, rejected; and refuſed to give them any further *Signs*: and commanded his *Diſciples* in like manner, to *ſhake off the duſt of their feet for a teſtimony againſt them*, and not continue to *caſt their pearls before ſwine*. God had dealt with the *Jews of old*, after the ſame manner: *Pſ.* lxxxi. 12; *My people would not hear my voice, and Iſrael would not obey me*; *So I gave them up unto their own hearts luſts, and let them follow their own Imaginations*. And to men in *future Ages*, who ſhall be found of the ſame temper, the Scripture threatens that God, in juſt anger, ſhall even ſend *them ſtrong deluſion, that they may believe a Lye*; 2 Th. ii. 11. The *Effect* of mens being in this manner given up for their Abuſing the divine patience, is thus expreſſed by the

* ἐσοπτρον. κάτοπτρον.

Matt. xii. 41.

SERM. LXXV.

Pſalmiſt: *Pſ.* lxxviii. 60, *When God heard this, he was wroth, and took ſore diſpleaſure at Iſrael: So that he forſook the tabernacle in Shilo, even the Tent that he had pitched among men: He delivered their power into captivity, and their beauty into the enemy's hand: He gave his people alſo over unto the ſword, and was wroth with his inheritance.* And by our Saviour in his affectionate lamentation over *Jeruſalem*; Matt. xxiii. 37, *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your houſe is left unto you deſolate.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXVI.

How the Law is said to be the Strength of Sin.

(*A Passion-Sermon.*)

1 Cor. xv. 56 and 57.

The sting of Death is sin, and the strength of Sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERM. LXXVI.

THE Apostle having in the former part of this Chapter, prov'd at large the truth of the resurrection of Christ, and the certainty of the future resurrection of Christians; and having from thence taken occasion to give a full and particular account of the order and manner of the resurrection of the body; he concludes his whole discourse with this triumphal exclamation; *So then when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*, i. e. utterly and for ever; *O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I shall endeavour, 1*st*, To explain the words briefly, and shew in what Sense Sin is said to be *the sting of death, and the law the strength of sin.* 2*dly*, I shall endea-

SERM. LXXVI.

endeavour to shew how and by what means Christ gives us the victory, over the law *which is the strength of sin*, over sin which *is the sting of death*, and finally over Death it self; And *lastly*, I shall draw some practical Inferences from the whole.

First, I shall endeavour to shew in what Sense Sin is said to be *the sting of death, and the law the strength of sin*. That by Sin's being the *sting of death*, is meant that Sin is the *cause* of Death, and that 'tis Sin only that makes Death terrible, is evident. *The first mention* we find of death's being in the World, is upon *Adam*'s committing the first transgression; *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*; Gen. ii. 17. And the cause of the continuance of its dominion ever since in the World, is the conformity of the rest of mankind to that of their Forefather; *As by one man sin first entered into the world, and death by sin*; and *so death has since passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*; Rom. v. 12. The Apostle lays it down as a maxim, that the cause of the dominion of death, is sin; and because it might be objected that since Sin is not imputed where there is no law, therefore those who lived between *Adam* and *Moses*, without any express revealed Law, should seem not to be concluded under the sentence of death; he adds, that even in *that* time, men *had* some discovery of the Will of God; So that before the delivery of *Moses*'s law Sin *was* in the World; and therefore death *did* reign from *Adam* to *Moses*, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of *Adam*'s transgression; that is, who had not indeed like *Adam* sinned against a positive and immediate Revelation of the Will of God, with an express threatning of death annexed; but yet had sinned against such a law, as they had sufficient reason to be assured was a discovery of the Will of God. The Scripture is very exceeding full in this point, inculcating every where, that as the knowledge of God and Obedience to his commands *is life*, so the immediate and necessary consequence of Sin is *death*. *When lust has conceived it bringeth forth Sin, and Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death*; St. *James* i. 15. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death*; Rom. vi. 21: and ver. 23; *the wages of sin is death*. Moreover, as Sin is the *cause* of death, so also is it *That* only which makes Death it self terrible. 'Tis not barely the separation of Soul and Body, which is the terror of death; but that separation, as inflicted *by*, and accompanied *with*, the wrath of God. Death may possibly be otherwise so far from terrible, that it may be and often *is* expected by good men with joy and comfort, as an entrance into life and happiness. 'Tis Sin only which is the horror of death, and which gives it that sting, which makes it really insupportable even to the most distant thought. When the death of the Body is the forerunner of that death of the Soul, from which there is no hopes of a Release, but the wrath of God must abide in it for ever; then is it that death appears truly dreadful and terrible. This is that which makes wicked Men conscious of their own guilt, and sensible of the wrath of God hanging over their heads, so amazed at the approach and even the thoughts of death: They cannot bear to think on so affrighting a prospect, but are even overwhelmed and swallowed up with astonishment and despair: Not that they so dread death barely and in it self, (*for they could call on the hills to fall on them, and to the mountains to cover them; they could seek death when they cannot find it, and desire to die when death shall flee from them*; Rev. ix. 6.) but it is the *consequences* of death, That sting which Sin gives it, that they are so terribly *and so justly afraid of*.

But to proceed: *The strength of Sin*, saith the Apostle, *is the law*; The strength of Sin, *viz.* that which gives it its power and efficacy. 'Tis evident that Sin is the transgression of the law, and that *where there is no law there is no transgression*; Rom. iv. 15: *By the law therefore is the knowledge of sin*; Rom. iii. 20: or as the Apostle more fully expresses himself; ch. vii. ver. 7 and 8; *I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet; But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; For without the law sin is dead:* that is, the knowledge of Sin must needs be, by the knowledge and promulgation of the law that forbids it. But this is not all; For in this sense, by *every* declaration of the Will of God, by every command and prohibition, is the knowledge of Sin; and so the Gospel it self

ſelf might as properly be ſtiled the ſtrength of ſin, as the law. Since therefore by the *Law*, the Apoſtle plainly means That diſcovery of the Will of God which was made to mankind before the Coming of Chriſt; and particularly that which was given to the *Jews*; in oppoſition to the Chriſtian or Goſpel-diſpenſation: it is certain that by its being the *ſtrength of Sin*, muſt be underſtood ſomething more, than barely its being the occaſion of the knowledge of Sin. It remains therefore, that it muſt ſignify the making *ſuch* a diſcovery of the heinous nature and guilt of Sin, as yet either not to afford a poſſibility of avoiding it, or not to diſcover any ſufficient means of recovering from it. Now in what ſenſe, and how far this may be truly applicable to the *Jewiſh* Law, is of ſome difficulty to determine: (For if the *Jews under the law* had neither any poſſibility of avoiding Sin, nor yet any ſufficient means of recovering from the guilt of it, it would follow that people were in much harder circumſtances than the repreſentations which the Scripture makes to us of God's diſpenſations and dealings with them allows us to ſuppoſe: I ſhall therefore for the clearing this whole matter, and to ſhew both in what ſenſe the Law is called the Strength of Sin, and how our Saviour has given us the victory over it, (which was the firſt thing I propoſed to ſpeak to,) endeavour briefly to prove theſe following Propoſitions. 1*ſt*, That the Original Law of God requires exact, perfect, and unſinning obedience; which ſince Man thro' the weakneſs and corruption of his nature is not capable of performing, men are all thereby neceſſarily concluded under Sin. 2*dly*, That that Law, under which the *Jews* were, ſo far as it is diſtinguiſhed from, and oppoſed to, the Grace or Goſpel of Chriſt; is the ſame with the Original Law of God, in its full force and ſeverity. 3*dly*, That yet God never dealt with men according to the ſtrictneſs and rigour of that Law, but always anticipated the favour of the Goſpel, and dealt with men according to the Gracious Terms of the New Covenant. 4*thly*, That our Saviour at his appearance, openly promulged and declared to all the World the leſs ſevere Terms of this Covenant of Grace, and by that means totally freed men from the fear and bondage of that rigorous Law, which was really in force until the time of his appearing; excepting only as God was pleaſed to anticipate the Grace and Favour of the New Covenant, at firſt by the ſecret diſpenſations of his Mercy, and the obſcure promiſes of a Redeemer to come; and afterwards, as the time of the promiſe drew near, by the more open and plain declarations of the prophets. 1*ſt*, The Original Law of God requires exact, perfect, and unſinning Obedience; which ſince man through the weakneſs and corruption of his nature, is not capable of performing, men are thereby neceſſarily concluded under Sin. This is evident from the conſideration of the Nature of *God*, and of the true and Original notion of a *Law*. The Authority of God being ſupreme, and the condition of his creatures abſolutely dependant; Obedience entire and conſtant, univerſal and perpetual, is plainly and naturally due to his commands: The Nature alſo of a *Law* being to require obedience; and proviſion for reconciliation after a violation of it, not being originally in the condition of a Law, but only an after-proviſion of Favour and Mercy: it is plain that originally to the Laws of God, there is due a perfect and unſinning Obedience. That therefore which the original law of God declares, is this; that as God is himſelf a Being of infinite purity and holineſs, ſo he cannot be pleaſed with any creature, that imitates not that purity according to the utmoſt capacity of its nature; that as there are eternal meaſures of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, which are as unchangeable as the nature of God and the conſtitution of things, ſo God cannot poſſibly delight in any creature that obſerves not theſe eſſential and fundamental laws of his Kingdom; that therefore men who are made capable of knowing God, are bound to worſhip him *as* God, without giving any part of that honour to another which is due only to *him*, or paying *him* that honour which is due to him, in a way not becoming the excellency of his nature; and in brief that knowing the eternal rules of juſtice and equity, honeſty and fidelity, temperance and ſobriety, to be the laws of his Kingdom, they are bound to be true and juſt in all their dealings one with another with all ſimplicity and ſincerity of mind, and to live in Sobriety, Temperance and Chaſtity, with all Purity and Holineſs: And this they are bound to do, conſtantly and at all times; the original law of God aſſuring

SERM. LXXVI.

indeed thoſe that obey it in all Points of a reward and the favour of God; but not providing any expiation, nor pointing with any certainty at the means of reconciliation, for thoſe who ſhall at any time have tranſgreſſed and incurred God's diſpleaſure. It is true the World always had great and reaſonable hopes, that God would be merciful to returning Sinners, and accept repentance inſtead of perfect innocence; But then theſe hopes were not founded on the Original condition of the law of God; but either on men's natural notion of the mercifulneſs and placability of the Divine nature (ſuch as the heathen World has always depended upon;) and theſe were only probable and hopeful preſumptions; or elſe on the obſcure promiſes made to *Adam* and the Patriarchs of a Meſſias to come, (ſuch as the holy and devout men before the giving of the Law of *Moſes* grounded their expectations of mercy upon;) and theſe were the firſt beginnings of the declaration of the Covenant of Grace. The Original law of God therefore, required perfect unſinning obedience; and thereby, ſince no man was able to perform it, neceſſarily concluded all men under Sin. 2*dly*, That Law, under which the *Jews* lived, ſo far as it is diſtinguiſhed from, and oppoſed to, the Grace or Goſpel of Chriſt; is the ſame with the original Law of God in its full Force and Severity. This is evident from its retaining and confirming all the moral precepts of Nature, with expreſs promiſe indeed *that the man which* doth *theſe things ſhall live by them*; Rom. x. 5; but with moſt rigorous threatnings alſo, *that Curſed ſhould be every one that continued not in all things which were written in the book of the law to do them*; Gal. iii. 10; not affording any expiation for great and wilful ſins paſt, but denouncing death without mercy againſt them; nor indeed allowing any atonement even for ſmaller Sins, but ſuch as plainly owed all their efficacy, to their being types of the mercy of the Covenant of grace. The ſame alſo is clear from the Apoſtles attributing all thoſe ſeverities to the *Jewiſh* Law, which are properly true only of the Original law of God; and his oppoſing it directly to the grace and mercy of the Goſpel-Covenant. *The law*, ſaith he, *is holy, and the commandment holy, and juſt and good*; Rom. vii. 12; it was ſuch as if it were exactly obeyed, would certainly juſtify a man, *i. e.* make him appear righteous in the Sight of God, and entitle him to the reward of obedience; *the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified*; Rom. ii. 13. But the corrupt eſtate of human nature being ſuch, that no man can obey this law in all points without ſinning, but that in *many things we offend all, for all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God*; Rom. iii. 23; hence the law which was ordained to the end that men obeying it might attain life and happineſs, ſerved only to their Condemnation, by working in their Conſciences a Conviction of their duty which they ought to have performed, and of the Wrath of God hanging over their heads for not performing it: *The commandment* ſaith he, *which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death*; Rom. vii. 10. And upon this account (I ſuppoſe) are thoſe ſo frequent expreſſions of the Apoſtle; *that the law worketh wrath*, Rom. iv. 15; *that by the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in the ſight of God*; Rom. iii. 20: *that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curſe*; Gal. iii. 10. *And that the law entered that the offence might abound*; Rom. v. 20: that is to ſay, not that it was deſigned to that end, but that in fact and by conſequence it *did* become a means of aggravating ſin and rendering it more exceedingly criminal; It is true the Law did indeed appoint certain ſacrifices of expiation for ſin; but ſuch as had not in themſelves *Any* efficacy to expiate ſin, any otherwiſe than as they typified that great ſacrifice which was once to be offered for the Sins of the whole World: The Tabernacle was a figure for the time then preſent, in which were offered both gifts and ſacrifices, that could not make him that did the ſervice perfect, as pertaining to the conſcience; *For the law having a ſhadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with thoſe ſacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect*; Heb. x. 1. Hence though thoſe good men who lived before the coming of Chriſt, were indeed juſtified; yet they are ſaid to be juſtified, how? not by the works of the law, but by faith; as St. *Paul* reaſoneth in his whole fourth Chapter to the *Romans*; His meaning is; They truſted not to ritual and ceremonious performances, but looked through the types and ſhadows of the law to the promiſed Meſſiah, being fully perſwaded that what

what God had promiſed he would aſſuredly perform; and this was counted unto them for righteouſneſs. Thus of *Abraham* particularly it is ſaid by the Apoſtle, *that he was not juſtified by the works of the law, ſo as to have wherewith to glory before God; but that he was juſtified by Faith*: and in like manner all the holy men, who lived under the law, did not expect to be juſtified in the ſight of God by the works of the law, but by their faith in God, and truſt in his promiſes. So the law was their Schoolmaſter to bring them unto Chriſt; and though they knew that nothing in the law could of it ſelf avail effectually to the forgiveneſs of ſins, yet they continued with patience walking in the Commandments of God, and waiting for the conſolation and redemption of *Iſrael*; *and accordingly when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made* [*of a Woman, made*] *under the law, that he might redeem thoſe that were under the law.* The *Jewiſh law* therefore, ſo far as it was diſtinguiſhed from, and oppoſed to, the grace or goſpel of Chriſt, was the ſame with the original law of God in its full force and ſeverity; and no fleſh could be juſtified thereby. SERM. LXXVI.

3*dly*, Yet God never dealt with men according to the ſtrictneſs and ſeverity of that Law, but always anticipated the favour of the goſpel, and dealt with men according to the gracious terms of the new Covenant. Thus though no fleſh could be juſtified by the law, yet both the Patriarchs who lived *before* the law (as I have already obſerved,) and all Holy men who lived *under* the Law, were juſtified; and this their juſtification *was by Faith*, i. e. by the terms of that new Covenant, *which in the fulneſs of time* was to be promulged openly and plainly to the whole World. Wherefore, though the Law appointed no expiation for great and preſumptuous Sins, yet God always pardoned Sinners upon their true repentance, (as appears in the caſe of *David* and others;) and as the times of the goſpel grew nearer and nearer, began by degrees to *declare* by his Prophets, that he would do ſo. *David* when he had committed thoſe crying Sins of Adultery and Murder, acknowledges that the ſeverity of the law allowed no Sacrifice of expiation for him; *Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, elſe would I give it thee, but thou delighteſt not in burnt-offerings*; Pſal. li. 16: Yet he hoped that upon his hearty repentance, forgiveneſs would not be impoſſible to be obtained at the Hands of God; *A broken and contrite heart, O God*, ſaith he, *thou wilt not deſpiſe*; ver. 17: and the event diſcovered that he did indeed obtain it. And God afterward by the Prophet *Ezekiel* declared publickly to the whole people of the *Jews*, that *when a wicked man turneth away from his wickedneſs, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he* ſhould *ſave his ſoul alive*: Thus though the Law, ſtrictly ſpeaking, was in force with its full ſeverity until the appearing of our Saviour, yet God never dealt with men according to that ſeverity, but always anticipated the Favour of the Goſpel, and judged men by the terms of the Covenant of grace. The *Law* was by *Moſes*, *Grace and Truth by Chriſt*.

4*thly*, This new Covenant of grace, which, before the coming of our Saviour, lay hid in the ſecret diſpenſations of God's mercy, and began in part and by degrees to be diſcovered, firſt by the obſcure promiſes of a Meſſiah to come, and afterwards by the more plain declarations of the Prophets; was at our Saviour's Appearance openly eſtabliſhed, and the terms of it publickly promulged to the whole World; ſo as to deliver men entirely from all fear of that rigour of the Law, which the Apoſtle ſtiles *the ſtrength of Sin*. This deliverance of men by the Goſpel from the burden and ſeverity of the Law, the Apoſtle in the Text calls a Victory; and this Victory our Saviour obtained for us, principally by theſe two things: 1*ſt*. By giving himſelf a ſacrifice and propitiation for ſins paſt, from which men could not be juſtified by the Law; and 2*dly*, By propoſing openly the gracious terms of Faith and Repentance to thoſe who believed and were deſirous to obey him. 1*ſt*, He gave himſelf a ſacrifice and propitiation for ſins paſt, from which men could not be juſtified by the law, *viz*. When it was not conſiſtent with the wiſdom of God in his government of the world, to let ſin go unpuniſhed, and yet he would have mercy upon ſinful man, *he ſent his own Son into the world in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, to bear our puniſhment, and ſo for ſin* (or as the words may moſt properly be rendered, *by being a ſacrifice* for ſin) *condemned ſin in the fleſh*; Rom. viii. 3. Hence Chriſt is ſaid to have *obtained redemption for*

us;

SERM. LXXVI.

us, Heb. ix. 12: *to have put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*, Heb. ix. 26: *to have given his life a ranſom for many*, St. Mat. xx. 28. for many: that is, *for all thoſe that ſhould believe and obey him*; as it is explained by St. *Paul*, 1 Tim. ii. 6: *to have bought us with a price*, 1 Cor. vi. 20: *to be the propitiation for our ſins*, Joh. ii. 2: *and to have purchaſed a church with his blood*, Acts xx. 28: with many the like expreſſions, which do all plainly ſignify, that Chriſt by his death and the ſhedding of his moſt precious blood, has made full and ſufficient ſatisfaction to the juſtice of God for the ſins of the whole world, that is, for as many as ſhall out of the world flee unto him, and ſubmit themſelves to the terms of the new covenant, whereof he is made the mediator. *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer ſprinkling the unclean, ſanctifieth to the purifying of the fleſh; How much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purge your Conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God*; Heb. ix. 13, 14. *2dly*, Our Saviour has openly propoſed to all the world, the gracious terms of Faith and Repentance; of Faith, that men believe on him as the Saviour of the world and the Meſſiah that was to come, profeſſing themſelves ſubjects of his Kingdom; and of Repentance, that men turn from the evil of their ways, and conform their lives to the laws of that Kingdom, whoſe ſubjects they profeſs themſelves to be: That they believe on him whom God hath ſent; and that they live ſuitably to that belief with ſincere endeavours to obey the whole goſpel, and hearty ſorrow and perpetually labouring after amendment, for all their failures in that obedience. Theſe are now the gracious terms of the Goſpel, which in the *New Teſtament* are every where preached as the conditions of Salvation. This was the Sum of *John Baptiſt*'s preaching, who was ſent to prepare the way before Chriſt; *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; St. Matt. iii. 2: with this our Saviour himſelf began his miniſtry; *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, Repent ye and believe the Goſpel*; Mar. i. 15: with this he concluded his charge to his Diſciples after his reſurrection; *Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature*; *He that believeth and is baptized*, i. e. he that believeth and enters into an obligation to live ſuitably to that belief, ſhall be ſaved; Mat. xvi. 15 and 16. This his Diſciples after his aſcenſion publiſhed to all the world, *preaching repentance and remiſſion of ſins in his name among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem*; Luke 24. 47. Laſtly, this is the Sum of all their exhortations, contained in their epiſtles to the ſeveral churches which had before believed through their preaching. And becauſe this repentance or turning from a life of ſin unto a life of righteouſneſs, is the ſumm of Religion under the goſpel-diſpenſation, therefore is it in Scripture expreſſed by great variety of phraſes, to the different capacities and underſtandings of men. Sometimes it is called *turning to the Lord*, that thoſe who by a courſe of ſin had been enemies to God, might by forſaking their ſins and following after righteouſneſs, be reconciled to him: Sometimes it is called *Converſion*, a word of the ſame import with that *of turning to the Lord*: Sometimes it is called *the renewing of our mind*; Sometimes *putting on the new man*, elſewhere *the new Creature*, to ſignify an entire change and reformation of life: and moſt frequently it is ſtiled *Regeneration*, *the new birth*, *newneſs of life*, and the like; all which phraſes are made uſe of to imply this one thing, that *thoſe who have been dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, thoſe who by any means have been engaged in a wicked courſe of life, muſt as it were by a new birth, by a thorough and entire reformation of life and manners, enter into a new courſe of life, and begin a life of righteouſneſs and holineſs. So careful has the Spirit of God been, that no one ſhould be ignorant of that which is ſo much his neceſſary and indiſpenſable Duty. Nothing is now required of us but that λογικὴ λατρεία, that reaſonable ſervice, of forſaking our Sins, and obeying in our lives and actions thoſe commands of God, which are ſo reaſonable in themſelves, and ſo evidently perfective of our nature, ſo neceſſarily approved by the minds of men, and the reaſon of their obligation ſo immediately acknowledged by the conſcience, *that they may truly be ſaid to be written in our hearts*; Heb. viii. 10; Yet to encourage our practice, they are moreover moſt fully explained, moſt earneſtly inculcated, and moſt ſtrongly inforced by the moſt powerful

erful motives in the New Teſtament. We are not now obliged to thoſe numberleſs ritual performances, which in the Scripture are called *weak and beggarly elements, and a burden which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear:* Our religion conſiſts not now in ſuch outward Ceremonies, whoſe obſervance was difficult, and their ſignification of times obſcure: *But the righteouſneſs which is of faith ſpeaketh on this wiſe, ſay not in thine heart, who ſhall aſcend into Heaven to bring Chriſt down from above? Or who ſhall deſcend into the deep to bring up Chriſt again from the dead? But what ſaith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart*; Rom. x. 6, 7 and 8; that is, the Goſpel-Covenant conſiſts not of ſuch ſtrict, difficult terms, as are above the reach of our knowledge or our ſtrength; but ſuch as may eaſily be underſtood by us, and performed alſo by the aſſiſtance of Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth us. A ſincere endeavour to perform our whole duty is the condition of the Goſpel; and he that ſo deſires to do the Will of God, can neither want knowledge to underſtand his duty, nor power to perform it: He ſhall know of Chriſt's doctrine, whether it be of God; and when he comes to practiſe it, ſhall find *his yoke eaſy and his burden light.* In a word, the Terms that Chriſt by his death has purchaſed for us, are plainly theſe; that whereas by the tranſgreſſion of the Original law of God, which required perfect and unſinning Obedience, all men were become guilty before God; and whereas by the addition of the ceremonial rites and ſacrifices of the *Jewiſh* law, which in their own nature could not avail to expiate ſin, men could not be juſtified from the tranſgreſſions they had committed; it is now declared by the Goſpel-Covenant that whoſoever believing in the name of Chriſt, ſhall repent him heartily of his former Sins, and for the future endeavour with all his might to obey ſincerely, tho' not without infirmities, all the Commandments of God; ſhall through the redemption purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt have his ſincerity accepted inſtead of perfect obedience, and thereby be juſtified from all things from which he could not be juſtified by the law; and this is that *juſtification by faith only*, which St. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Romans* ſo often oppoſes to *being juſtified by the works of the law.* Having thus endeavoured briefly to explain what is meant *by the Law being the Strength of Sin*; and by what means our Saviour has delivered us from it, or given us the victory over it; I ſhould proceed now in the 2*d* place to conſider how he *gives us the Victory over Sin which is the Sting of Death:* And this he does, by delivering us 1*ſt* from the dominion, and 2*dly* from the guilt and puniſhment of Sin. Firſt, he frees men from that bondage and thraldom, into which Sin has reduced them; and then thoſe who are ſo freed he delivers from that puniſhment, which muſt have been the neceſſary conſequence of their being inthralled to Sin. But the time not permitting me to enter upon this, I ſhall only draw an inference or two from what has been already ſaid, and ſo conclude. And 1*ſt* from what has been ſaid, we may underſtand why St *Paul* in his writings concerning the *Jewiſh* Law, always deſcribes it as of ſuch ſeverity by which *no fleſh could poſſibly be juſtified:* when yet it is plain God never dealt with men according to *that ſeverity*: and why he ſo exceedingly magnifies the grace and mercy of the Goſpel, notwithſtanding it be evident that God always dealt with men according to *that indulgence.* Now the plain ſolution of this difficulty is this. The Apoſtle ſpeaking of the Law, is not to be underſtood complexly of God's whole diſpenſation and dealing with the *Jews*, but of the Law properly and ſtrictly, as it is diſtinguiſhed from and oppoſed to the Goſpel; *viz.* ſuch as it was in itſelf, and ſuch as it really would have been, if the Goſpel-Covenant had never been eſtabliſhed. For though there *was* indeed indulgence *under* the Law, yet that indulgence was not *from* the Law, but an anticipation, as I have ſaid, of the mercy of the Goſpel. The Law itſelf was not therefore the leſs ſevere, becauſe the indulgence of the Goſpel extended itſelf backward even under the times of the Law; neither is the mercy of the Goſpel to be therefore the leſs magnified, becauſe it is no other than what had in effect before been indulged under the Law. For ſince the one was in itſelf really as ſevere as it is deſcribed, and had no indulgence but what was borrowed from and founded upon the other, there is no reaſon at all why this ſhould be conſidered when the one is ſpoken of in oppoſition to the other; which is the ſtate of the Apoſtle's Argument; and there-

SERM. LXXVI.

SERM. LXXVI.

fore he moſt reaſonably aggravates the ſeverity of the Law, and upon the compariſon moſt juſtly magnifies the mercy and favour of the Goſpel: Gal. ii. 21; *If righteouſneſs came by the Law, then Chriſt is dead in vain.*

2*dly*, From what has been ſaid, we may learn, that the whole deſign and effect of the Goſpel, *was not to deſtroy, but to fulfil the Law.* The whole deſign of all God's diſpenſations with mankind, is to prevent or deſtroy Sin. This the Law was to do originally, by requiring perfect and unſinning obedience: But when inſtead of this, it only concluded all men under Sin; the deſign of the Goſpel was to effect the ſame, by requiring and by accepting Repentance; which being no other than renewed obedience, it is plain the Goſpel does not deſtroy but eſtabliſh the Law. The ſeverity indeed of the Law was ſo far to be qualified by the indulgence of the Goſpel, that it might not be any longer the *Strength of Sin*: But the Goſpel did not take away the obligation of the Law, ſo as to be itſelf the cauſe and the occaſion of ſinning. The moral Law denounced a Curſe againſt every one that continued not in all the works thereof to do them; and the Goſpel delivers all thoſe from this Curſe, who by true Repentance renew their Obedience: The Ceremonial Law was an inſupportable burden of rites, inſufficient of themſelves to make any expiation for ſin; and the Goſpel, by exhibiting the true and ſufficient expiation, has delivered all men from the burden of this yoke. As therefore thoſe perſons [Judaizing Chriſtians] in the primitive times were very unreaſonable, who contended that any of theſe ritual obſervations were of neceſſity to be kept up after the coming of Chriſt; ſo thoſe Perverters of Chriſtianity in later ages are on the other ſide much more unreaſonable, who contend that the moral Law has been aboliſhed by Chriſt. The Goſpel accepts indeed the terms of *Faith and Repentance*; but 'tis only for the ſake of the *Fruit and Effect* of them, which is *renewed obedience*. So that nothing can be more abſurd, than for Chriſtians to think themſelves excuſed from holineſs of life and thoſe duties of religion, which as the unchangeable Nature of God and of the things themſelves had made the neceſſary requiſites, ſo the Goſpel alſo has made the expreſs condition of their being acceptable to God. Our Saviour himſelf tells us, that *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* The Goſpel itſelf ſpeaks aloud, and tells us, that *we muſt deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, that *we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, Who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* The Apoſtle St *Paul*, That great vindicator of the liberties of Chriſtians, warns and perſwades us, and repeats it with great earneſtneſs over and over again; *Be not deceived; and let no man deceive you with vain words; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards*, and ſo on; *i. e.* no one that allows himſelf and continues in any one known vice; ſhall according to the terms of the Goſpel of Chriſt, *inherit the kingdom of God. For, Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, ſaith our Saviour, *but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.*

Laſtly, From what has been ſaid, we may learn to reconcile the *Severity* and the *Compaſſion* of God; the *Severity*, in giving a Law which required ſinleſs Obedience; and the *Compaſſion* in mitigating it, by the Grace and Mercy of the Goſpel; Which Grace extended itſelf backwards to good men under the Law; and the Severity will reach forward to the impenitent under the Goſpel. *O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* To conclude therefore, Let us then heartily ſet about the reformation of our lives, and by obedience to God's commands endeavour to walk worthy of that religion we profeſs, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let us conſider and admire the infinite wiſdom and mercy of God, in reſtoring men to a capacity of attaining that happineſs by the obedience of the ſecond Covenant, which they utterly forfeited by the tranſgreſſion of the firſt; and let us not fruſtrate the grace of God by the diſobedience of our lives, leſt there remain no more Sacrifice for our Sin: *For if the word ſpoken by Angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience re-*

rei-

ceived a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great Sal- SERM.
vation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us LXXVI.
by them that heard him? For if we ſin wilfully after we have received the Knowledge of the Truth; that is, if Chriſtians live as thoſe who know not God, in the Practice of any vice or debauchery whatſoever; *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin*, no new Diſpenſations; *but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXVII.

How CHRIST has enabled us to conquer Sin.

[*Preached on Eaſter-Day.*]

1 COR. xv. 56 and 57.

The ſting of Death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

SERM. LXXVII.

WHEN he who was the deſire and expectation of Nations appeared firſt in the World, it highly concerned all thoſe who looked for redemption in *Iſrael*, rightly to underſtand the end and deſign of his coming: And if we who live at this diſtance of time after his appearing in the fleſh, expect yet to be partakers of the common Salvation which he has purchaſed for us; it highly concerns *Us* alſo to underſtand wherein that Salvation conſiſts, and how and on what conditions he has purchaſed it for us. The *Jews* who lived about the time of his coming, miſled by a partial application and wrong interpretation of the prophecies that went before concerning him, expected *a temporal prince to appear in the power and ſplendor of this world, who ſhould deliver their nation from that ſlavery into which the Romans had ſubdued them, and reſtore again the king-*

dom

SERM. LXXVII.

dom to Israel; They expected that *Jerusalem* should have become once again the Head of the nations, and the glory of the whole Earth; *They expected that Messiah the prince should have come to sit upon the throne of David for ever, and to have established a kingdom among them which should have had no end.* And so indeed he did; though in a sense far different from what they expected. Nay, his Disciples themselves were for a great while so blinded with the splendor of this opinion, that they understood none of those prophecies that related to his Humiliation, Sufferings, and Death; As appears from St. *Peter*'s undertaking to rebuke him when he began to foretel *how many things he should suffer of the Jews*; and from his Disciples asking him even *after* his resurrection if he would at this time restore again the kingdom to *Israel*. But as he himself a little before his death witnessed before *Pontius Pilate* that good confession, *that his kingdom was not of this world*; so his Disciples, after his resurrection and ascension, began to have their eyes opened, and to understand that the design of his coming into the World was wholly Spiritual. And as at the descending of the Holy Ghost they were more perfectly instructed in the nature and end of That his Spiritual kingdom, so did they afterward in their inspired writings deliver to *us*, what they then received from that unerring instructor: Namely, that the true end and design of Christ's coming into the World, was to deliver men, not from their Temporal Enemies, but to save them from their Sins. Now This he does, by delivering us 1*st*, from the power and dominion of Sin; and 2*dly*, from the guilt and punishment thereof. First he delivers men from that Bondage and Slavery into which the practice of Sin has reduced them; and then those who are so freed, he delivers from that *punishment* which must have been the necessary consequence of their being enslaved to Sin. These are the two great designs which exhaust the whole history of our Saviour; there being nothing that he either said or did, which was not directed to one of these great ends. 1*st* then, We are to show, how Christ delivers us from the *dominion* or *practice* of Sin. That the service of Sin is an intolerable thraldom, All who are so unhappy as to be engaged in any habit of Vice, do sadly experience; and it may also easily be observed by others. This deplorable state, is fitly described by *Solomon* under the person of a foolish young man, drawn away with the enticements of a Strange woman; *Prov.* vii. 22. *He goeth after her straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.* This is the case of all, who are under the dominion and habit of *any* Sin; they know not whither they are going, but are hurried away blindfold with every temptation, being intangled in the snare of the Devil, and taken captive by him at his will. Hence such a state of Sin is stiled in Scripture a *yoke*, *burden*, *captivity*, *bondage*, *thraldom*, and the like; and habitual Sinners are described to be *dead in Sin*, to let Sin *reign* in their mortal bodies, to be *sold* under Sin, to be in *captivity* to the law of Sin and Death, to be *hardned* through the deceitfulness of Sin, to be such as *cannot cease* from Sin, and, by a phrase which includes all these, to be *Servants* of Sin; being constrained to obey it in the lusts thereof, even against the dictates of their reason and conscience; *for to whom ye yield your selves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey*, Rom. vi. 16. Now That which Christ has actually done for us in order to the delivering us from the dominion of Sin, may briefly be expressed in these two propositions; 1*st*, that he has made a most clear discovery of the Will of God to mankind; and 2*dly*, that he has enabled them to obey the Will of God according to that discovery. 1*st*, He has made a most clear discovery of the Will of God to Mankind. He has plainly and fully made known to us, the heinousness of Sin, and the necessity of Repentance; he has most exactly defined the bounds of our duty, and given us an example of the practice of it in his own life; he has more clearly revealed the great motives of religion, and urged them upon men with much stronger advantage. To show these things at large, would be to repeat the whole history of our Saviour; and no man can read the New Testament wherein That history is contained, without observing that all his discourses and all the actions of his life, were directed principally to These ends: To convince men that Sin is so hateful to God, and so inconsistent with the honour of his laws, that he would not pardon it even in those whom he designed to have mercy upon, without first inflicting the punishment

SERM. LXXVII.

that was due to it, upon his only Son. To assure men, that a life of Virtue and true Righteousness, is the only and indispensable condition of *That* Covenant, wherein God has promised to save them from everlasting destruction. That therefore *unless we repent*, *we* must *perish*, Luke xiii. 5. That *without Holiness*, *no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. That no man who continues in the practice of any known Sin, *shall in any wise enter into the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9; and that, however vain men may deceive themselves, no pretence whatsoever, no not of having *preached or worked miracles in the name of Christ*, shall be accepted instead thereof, *Matt.* vii. 21. Further; is it not a very Advantagious stating of the bounds of our duty, to have given us such a compleat and perfect rule of Life and Manners, as the Holy Scriptures cannot but be acknowledged to be? Is it not a sufficient Security against ignorance and mistake in our duty, to have such a Rule given us as contains in the plainest words all things needful for our information in all necessary truth, and for the confuting of all pernicious error; for correcting and reclaiming us from all Sin, and for our instruction and encouragement in all Righteousness? to have such a Rule, wherein our duty is set down both in general and in particulars, with great variety of expression, repeated, urged, and inculcated upon the meanest capacities, and exemplified in the lives of holy men, as patterns proposed to our imitation? The History of our Saviour's life, is a compleat example of all virtues; but more especially of Patience, Charity, and Contempt of the World: His Sermons contain such excellent and perfect rules of Morality, as have raised the admiration even of the most implacable enemies of his Religion; and his Parables are Declarations of the nature and design of the Gospel-dispensation by such plain and easy similitudes, as the vulgar were able to bear, and those who were well-disposed were capable of understanding. The Sermons of the Apostles contain such proofs of the truth and certainty of the Christian Religion, as were necessary to the conversion of Infidels; and their Epistles are filled with the inforcements of such Christian Duties, as are necessary to the Salvation of believers; containing also Exhortations to the practice of special duties, upon particular and emergent occasions. So that every man that sincerely desires to know the will of God and to obey it, without being prejudiced with Partiality and Disputes, with Passions and Interest, may here find his duty written in such legible characters, *that he that runs may read it*: *Lastly*, Men's duty being thus made known, is it not a most clear and advantagious revelation of the powerful Motives and Inforcements of that duty; to be assured that there is a future state of Rewards and Punishments, wherein *God will judge the world in righteousness*, *and render to every man according to what he has done in the body*, *whether it be good or evil*; and to be assured of the certainty of that state, not by the uncertain and disagreeing conjectures of such men, as undertook to prove it probable by difficult and abstruse reasonings, but by the testimony of one, who by that convincing proof of his Resurrection from the Dead, did undeniably demonstrate that he had himself been in that invisible state?

But 2*dly*, As Christ has thus made a most clear Discovery of the Will of God to Mankind, so hath he also enabled them to obey the Will of God according to that discovery. As he has provided a sufficient remedy against Ignorance of our duty, so he has likewise made a sufficient provision against our Inability to perform it. Now this he has done, 1*st*, By requiring easier conditions of us, than could without his mediation have been accepted. And 2*dly*, By graciously affording us his assistance, to perform what he so requires. 1*st*, He requires easier conditions of us, than could without his mediation have been accepted. It is the great and peculiar priviledge of the Gospel-dispensation, that whereas the original law of God required perfect unsinning obedience, and consequently men in this corrupt estate were thereby of necessity concluded all under Sin; the covenant of mercy established by the Death of Christ, has relaxed that rigour which the Apostle calls the *strength of Sin*, and reduced the condition of Salvation to such terms, as are not impracticable, nay nor indeed *grievous* to human nature, even in this present state; He has reduced it to the gracious terms of Faith, and unfeigned Repentance; a Repentance, and sincere Endeavours to obey his Commandments to the best of our Ability for the time to come. But if Christians will still continue in the practice,

and

and under the dominion of Sin, notwithstanding this way which Christ has opened for them to Salvation; it is their own fault and their extreme folly here, and will be their condemnation and misery hereafter. It is true, such is the corruption of our nature and the weakness of our faculties, that we are not indeed *sufficient of ourselves to do or think any thing as of ourselves*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. But then it is true also, that we have a much greater Sufficiency, even that Sufficiency which is from God, as the Apostle immediately adds: which is the second thing whereby I said our Saviour enables us to obey the will of God, according to that discovery of it which he has made to us in the Gospel; he enables us, by graciously affording us his assistance, to perform what he requires of us. Though we have indeed contracted much Weakness and Impotency by our wilful degeneracy from Goodness, yet That Grace which the Gospel offers us for our assistance, is sufficient for us; *I can do all things*, saith St. *Paul*, *through Christ that strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. Though we are indeed encompassed with many and potent enemies, whose business it is to tempt us and to deter us from our duty; yet are we indued with a power, by which we are enabled to resist and to conquer all these temptations; *For greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world*; 1 Joh. iv. 4: *So that in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*; Rom. viii. 37. God knoweth the frailty of our nature, and considereth how many temptations we are continually liable to; he *remembereth whereof we are made, and considereth that we are but Dust*; He knoweth our enemy's strength and our own weakness, and therefore he affords us the *continual* assistance of his Holy Spirit, to supply our natural want of power. He has promised to succour all those who sincerely desire to obey his will; and, if we be not wanting in our own endeavours, we may rely upon *him*, that he will be faithful to his promise, and not *suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it*; 1 Cor. x. 13, Thus in order to the delivering us from the habit and power of Sin, our Saviour by making a most clear Discovery of the Will of God to Mankind, and by enabling them to obey the Will of God according to that Discovery, has put us in our own power, if *we* for our part will but accept this deliverance, and, by the way which he has opened for us, retreat out *of the bondage of Sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God*. Christ has compleatly performed *his* office for us; *he has paid the price; he has redeemed us out of captivity:* It is our part to take care that we continue not wilfully in the service of Sin, *lest we be found to do despite unto the Spirit of Grace, crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame*. Now this is what Christ has done for All *those* in general, to whom the Gospel is *preached*: But then 2*dly*, Those who *accept* of this deliverance from the dominion of Sin, that is, who by Repentance and true Amendment of life embrace the terms of the Gospel; those, and those only, he further delivers from the guilt and punishment of Sin: And in order to this, 1*st*, He hath vindicated the honour of God's laws by taking upon himself the punishment of their Sins; and 2*dly*, *He sits at the right hand of God*, ready to come in *the glory of his Father with his holy Angels*, actually to deliver them from That punishment of Sin, which *shall* finally be inflicted on them that would not be delivered from the dominion of it; even on those *who know not God and obey not the Gospel*; *i.e.* who either embraced not the Gospel at all, when it was preached to them; or pretending to embrace it, yet obeyed it not. 1*st*, He has vindicated the honour of God's laws, by taking upon himself the punishment of *their* Sins, who repent and embrace the terms of the Gospel. He condescended to *be made Sin for us, who himself knew no Sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21: *to be made Sin for us*, *i.e.* to be made a *Sacrifice* for our Sins, that we through that expiation might become subjects *capable of the mercy* of God. He took upon him our Nature, and was clothed in flesh, partly indeed that he might preach the Will of God to mankind in a nearer and more condescending conversation with them; but principally, that he who in the form of God could not suffer, might become capable of suffering by being made in the likeness to man. He lived a most innocent and spotless life, that he might indeed set us an example that we should follow his steps; but chiefly, because as it was required that the typical Sacrifices under the law should be whole and without blemish; so it was necessary that he, who was to be the real expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins

SERM. LXXVII.

of

SERM. LXXVII.

of others, ſhould have none that needed expiation of his own; *For ſuch an High prieſt became us, who is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners, and made higher than the heavens*; Heb. vii. 26. He ſuffered a ſhameful and ignominious Death upon the Croſs, that he might indeed give us an example of patience and readineſs to ſuffer; but the principal deſign of it was, that he might put away Sin by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and obtain eternal redemption for us *through Faith in his Blood*. His Reſurrection, was the demonſtration of this Sacrifice's being accepted by God; and his Aſcenſion into Heaven, was in order to plead the merits of his Sufferings before God, and interceed for thoſe, who according to the terms of the Goſpel-Covenant ſhould be capable of receiving the gracious benefits purchaſed by his Death: Wherefore 2*dly*, He now ſits at the right hand of God, ready to appear in the glory of his Father with the Holy Angels, actually to deliver all thoſe from the puniſhment of Sin, who have before been delivered by him from the dominion thereof. This ſitting at the right hand of God, ſignifies his having ſubdued all his enemies, and his being fully inſtated in his Regal power; *All things being actually made ſubject unto him, always excepting* him, as St. *Paul* directs, *who did put all things under* him. *All power both in heaven and earth is now committed unto him; being exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come; God having put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the Church.* When therefore this his Mediatorial kingdom ſhall be finiſhed, and the number of his Elect accompliſhed, then *unto them that look for him ſhall he appear the ſecond time without Sin unto Salvation*, Heb. ix. 28. Then ſhall he redeem his Elect from death, and ranſom them from the power of the grave: *Then ſhall the Sea give up the dead that are in it, and Death and Hell ſhall deliver up the Dead that are in* them, *and death ſhall be ſwallowed up in victory; O Death, where is thy ſting! O Grave, where is thy victory!* But this deliverance from the *firſt* and *natural* Death, ſhall be common both to the Juſt and Unjuſt. It is the *Second death* that ſhall be properly and finally the puniſhment of Sin; and from This, the *Juſt* only ſhall be delivered. *Whoſoever believeth on me, ſhall never die*, Joh. xi. 26: that is, (as the words may more properly be rendered,) *ſhall not die for ever*. On the Juſt the Second death ſhall have no power, but they ſhall be prieſts of God and of Chriſt; they ſhall be made compleatly happy both in Body and Soul, and ſhall reign with him for ever and ever.

The application I ſhall make of what hath been ſaid, ſhall be only in theſe two brief inferences: 1*ſt*, If Chriſt delivers no man from the puniſhment of Sin, who is not firſt delivered from the ſervice and dominion of it; then no man who continues in the ſervice and dominion of Sin, can expect to be delivered from the puniſhment thereof. Chriſt *has* indeed given himſelf a propitiatory Sacrifice, a full, perfect, and ſufficient Oblation for the Sins of the whole World; but it is not that the whole World, or that any particular perſons ſhould abſolutely and unconditionately be thereby excuſed from the puniſhment of Sin; but that all thoſe who by true Repentance turn from Sin and become righteous, ſhould obtain Remiſſion and Reconciliation with God: For he did not die, that he might indulge men *in* Sin, but that he might ſave them *from* it. Chriſt *has* indeed brought Life and Immortality to light, and opened an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God; but it is not that any unreformed and unrenewed nature ſhould be made partaker of that Spiritual Happineſs, or be admitted to have a ſhare in thoſe pure and undefiled Rewards; but that thoſe who have broken off their Sins by Repentance, and their Iniquities by Righteouſneſs and ſhewing mercy to the poor, (which is the Wedding-garment required by our Lord in the Parable,) ſhould be entertained at the eternal Supper of the Lamb: For as impoſſible as it is for God to ceaſe to be holy, or for the purity of the Divine Nature to be reconciled to Sin, ſo impoſſible is it for a wicked man to obtain remiſſion whilſt he continues wicked, or for a Sinner to be admitted into the kingdom of Heaven. *Be not deceived*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners*, that is, no unrighteous perſon that continues in the practice of any known Sin, *ſhall inherit the kingdom of God*; 1 Cor. vi. 9; Again, *Gal.* 21; having reckoned up the like catalogue of Sins, he adds,

adds, *of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they which do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* And *Epheſ.* v. 6; *Let no man deceive you with vain words, for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience.* 2*dly*, If Chriſt delivers no man from the dominion of Sin any otherwiſe than by giving him a clear knowledge of his duty, and a ſufficient power to perform it, then no man who makes not uſe of that knowledge and power to an actual performance of his duty, can be delivered from the dominion of Sin. Chriſt hath completely performed *his* office for us; but if *We* will not alſo perform what remains for *us* to do for ourſelves; if we will yet chuſe rather to continue in the ſervice of Sin, than to come forth into the glorious liberty to which we are called; we muſt, notwithſtanding all that Chriſt has done for us, continue ſtill under the dominion of Sin, and ſhall at laſt fall into the *puniſhment thereof*. The Imputation of the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, (which ſome have vainly depended upon, while they themſelves continue to live in open contempt of his righteous laws,) is a falſe and groundleſs imagination: 'Tis the unalterable Nature of Things, and the Will of God; that if we expect to be made happy for ourſelves, we *muſt* alſo become righteous for ourſelves. Righteouſneſs is not an outward imaginary quality, but an inward and real diſpoſition of the heart and ſoul, which muſt ſhow forth itſelf in real and ſubſtantial acts of Holineſs and Piety. *Little children, let no man deceive you; he that* doeth *righteouſneſs, is righteous*; 1 Joh. iii. 7: And St. *James*, ch. i. 27; *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world.* Let no man therefore deceive himſelf with vain imaginations, in hopes of being accounted righteous any other way, than by that which God has propoſed to us in his holy Scriptures: Let us conſider how great things Chriſt has done in order to our Salvation; and let us ſhew forth our thankfulneſs for what *he* has done for us, by heartily ſetting about what he has abſolutely required that *we* ſhould do for *ourſelves*: Let us ſincerely endeavour to obey the Will of God as diſcovered to us in the Goſpel; and then we may firmly hope for (and ſhall certainly obtain) remiſſion, not through the merits of that our Righteouſneſs which is imperfect, but through the redemption purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt, wherein we are by that ſincere, though imperfect Righteouſneſs, made capable of having a ſhare.

SERM. LXXVII.

SERMON LXXVIII.

How CHRIST has given us the Victory over Death.

[*Preached on Easter-Day.*]

1 COR. xv. 56 and 57.

The ſting of Death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

SERM. LXXVIII.

I Proceed now to the third and laſt Thing I propoſed, which was to ſhow how Chriſt gives *us the Victory over Death, which is the laſt enemy to be deſtroyed*; 1 Cor. xv. 26; *Death* is either natural and temporal, which is the Death of the body; or eternal, which is the Death and the Deſtruction of the Soul. In the Old Teſtament, Death generally ſignifies that *temporal* Death, which is the diſſolution of the body; tho' when it is threatened as the puniſhment of Sin, it prefigures and includes in it *eternal* Death. Which is alſo ſometimes expreſly threatned even in the *Old* Teſtament; thus Ezek. xviii. 26; *When a righteous man turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquities, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done ſhall he die*; the manner of expreſſion is very obſervable: If he repent not of his iniquity but *dieth* in it, *then* for the iniquity that he

he hath done ſhall he die. In the *New Teſtament*, Death, when 'tis threatened to Sinners, ſignifies almoſt always *eternal* Death; the Goſpel containing, as a more clear diſcovery of life and immortality, ſo alſo a more expreſs revelation of the wrath of God from Heaven, againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men. Now over *both* theſe kinds of Death, Death temporal and eternal, Chriſt gives us the victory, or delivers us from the power of them: The power of *temporal* Death is univerſal, as the puniſhment threatened to *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion was extenſive; and the deliverance from it ſhall be alſo univerſal; *For as in* Adam *all die*, all are become ſubject to mortality; *even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive*; 1 Cor. xv. 22. *Eternal* Death is the puniſhment of unrepented Sin, and from This all thoſe who repent and obey the Goſpel, ſhall be delivered by Chriſt. SERM. LXXVIII.

I ſhall conſider 1*ſt* the victory that Chriſt gives us over *temporal* Death; and for the clearer explaining the nature of this victory, ſhall endeavour to ſhow 1*ſt*, That there ſhall be a reſurrection of the body, and 2*dly*, in what manner the body ſhall be raiſed.

1*ſt*, That there ſhall be a reſurrection of the body. That the ſoul ſhould ſurvive the diſſolution of the body, and be capable of receiving in a future State the rewards or puniſhments due to the good or evil it had done in *this* life, was clearly enough deducible from the light of nature, and proved by undeniable reaſonings: But that the body ſhould be again formed out of the duſt, and reunited to the Soul, from which it was ſeparated by Death, was a Doctrine, which as it could not be proved merely by reaſon and argument, ſo the Philoſophers, who pretended to be the great maſters of reaſon, looked upon it as the moſt impoſſible thing in nature. Some of them reckoned it among thoſe things, which they thought were not in the power even of their Gods themſelves to effect; and we read of certain Philoſophers, *Act.* xvii. 18; who incountered St. *Paul*, and when they heard of the reſurrection, they mocked him, ſaying, *that he ſeemed to be a ſetter forth of ſtrange Gods, becauſe he preached unto them Jeſus and the Reſurrection.* Yet is there nothing in any wiſe impoſſible, or contrary to reaſon, in this great Myſtery: *For why ſhould it be thought a thing impoſſible that God ſhould raiſe the dead?* Why ſhould it be more impoſſible for God to gather together the diſperſed parts of a corrupted body, and reunite them to their former Soul, than to create matter at firſt out of nothing, and then form it into a human body, *and breathe into it the breath of life?* Why ſhould any man be ſo weak as to imagine, that he, who at the creation ſeparated the confuſed maſs of matter into ſo many different ſorts of bodies, cannot with the ſame eaſe at the general Reſurrection ſeparate again the ſame confuſed matter, and aſſign to each particular body its own parts? If it is not difficult for him *to number the Stars of Heaven and call them all by their Names*; it can be no difficulty to him to keep an exact account of all our ſcattered parts; and to recollect and reunite them when he pleaſes. 'Twas not therefore becauſe the thing is in itſelf at all impoſſible, but only becauſe the manner of it is a myſtery not diſcoverable barely by the light of nature, that the Heathen World was utterly ignorant of the Reſurrection from the dead. The proof therefore of this great truth muſt be founded in Revelation, and ſought for only in the Holy Scriptures. And here it muſt be confeſſed, that the *Jews* had not a clear and expreſs revelation of this matter: Yet were they by no means *wholly* ignorant of it; there being ſeveral paſſages in the Old Teſtament, from whence the hope of a Reſurrection might very reaſonably be collected. The tranſlation of *Enoch* and *Elijah* into Heaven with their bodies, was an earneſt of what might finally be expected, by thoſe who ſhould follow their example in pleaſing God; and the ſtrict command that *Jacob* and *Joſeph* gave, not to be buried in *Egypt*, but to have *their bones carried up into the land of Canaan and laid in the Sepulchres of their Fathers*; was to many of the antient *Jews* an argument or type of their hope of a Reſurrection. That the thing was not in itſelf impoſſible, the inſtances of ſuch as were actually raiſed from the dead by the Prophets, was a ſignal proof. And *Iſaiah* xxvi. 19; *Thy dead men ſhall live, together with my dead body ſhall they ariſe: awake and ſing, ye that dwell in duſt: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth ſhall caſt out the dead.* And the viſion of *Ezekiel*, ſet down in the 37*th* Chapter of his Prophecy, tho' it ſignified indeed primarily the Reſtauration of *Iſrael* to their own land, yet in all probability, conſidering the peculiar Emphaſis and particularity

SERM. LXXVIII.

ty of the deſcription, it was intended remotely to point at a greater and more general Reſtauration; *Behold a valley full of dry bones, and there was a noiſe, and behold a ſhaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone, the ſinews and the fleſh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above, and their breath came into them, and they lived and ſtood upon their feet, and behold a great multitude.* But that paſſage in the Prophet *Daniel*, tho' by ſome it be, with great violence to the Words, otherwiſe interpreted; is moſt expreſs, and by the antient *Jews* underſtood of the Reſurrection; *Dan.* xii. 2 and 3; *Many of them that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt; and they that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever, and thou ſhall reſt and ſtand in thy lot at the end of the days*; Dan. xii. 13. Laſtly, that ſolemn Prophecy of *Job*; ch. xix. ver. 23; *Oh that my Words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the latter Day upon the earth: And tho' after my ſkin worms deſtroy this body, yet in my fleſh ſhall I ſee God:* Theſe words, I ſay, tho' by many of the antient *Jews* they were interpreted concerning a future State without reſpect in particular to the Reſurrection of the body, and by ſome later Interpreters are underſtood only of his reſtitution to his temporal greatneſs; yet becauſe of their being introduced with ſo very ſolemn and weighty a preface, as containing ſomewhat of the higheſt moment and importance; they are by others not without great reaſon thought to be ſpoken concerning the Reſurrection of the body. And that the *Jews* did believe, that the bodies, at leaſt of ſuch remarkably pious men, ſhould riſe again, appears plainly from the tranſlation of the laſt Verſe of the book of *Job* according to the Seventy, which in their Verſion runs thus; *So* Job *died, being old and full of days; 'tis written that he ſhall riſe again with thoſe whom the Lord raiſes up.* The *Jews* therefore had at leaſt an obſcure and indeterminate expectation of the Reſurrection of the body; Nay, the later *Jews* more certain: For ſo one of the ſeven Brethren, 2 *Macc.* vii. 9, 11; when his hands were to be cut off; *Theſe*, ſays he, *I had from Heaven, and for his laws I deſpiſe them, and from him I hope to receive them again: For the King of the World ſhall raiſe us up, who have died for his Laws, to everlaſting Life.* But now in the *New Teſtament* this Doctrine is ſo clearly revealed, that it may juſtly be wondered how it was poſſible for any one that believed the Goſpel at all, to doubt of the certainty of it. Yet we read that there were, even ſo very early as in the days of the Apoſtles themſelves, *who concerning this truth, did err, ſaying that the reſurrection is paſt already, and overthrow the faith of ſome*; 2 Tim. ii. 18. But as their opinion was ſo abſurd as to need no confutation, ſo in a little time it entirely vaniſhed of itſelf. I ſhall not therefore inſiſt on any other argument for the proof of this doctrine, than that which the Apoſtle makes uſe of in this Chapter; which is the Reſurrection of Chriſt: *For*, ſaith he, *if there be no reſurrection of the dead, then is Chriſt not riſen; And if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith alſo is vain; But now Chriſt is riſen from the dead, and become the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept*; ver. 13, 14. The force of which argument is plainly this: If there be no reſurrection of the dead, then is that doctrine, which the Apoſtles preached concerning it, erroneous and falſe; and if that doctrine be falſe, then the reſurrection of Chriſt, which is the proof of that doctrine, muſt likewiſe be falſe: If therefore the reſurrection of Chriſt be true, as he had before proved *by a cloud of Witneſſes* at the beginning of the Chapter, then the Apoſtles doctrine, of which that of his reſurrection was the evidence, muſt alſo be true; and if the Apoſtles preaching, and the promiſes of God made known by the Goſpel, be true, then *ſhall the dead certainly riſe again.* That is: As certain as the reſurrection of Chriſt is true, as certain as the Chriſtian Religion is a revelation credibly atteſted to be from God; ſo certain is it, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead: *If Chriſt, who is our Head, be riſen; then ſhall we alſo riſe with him unto glory. I am the reſurrection and the life*, ſaith our *Bleſſed Saviour*; Joh. xi. 25; *and this is the Will of him that ſent me, that every one which ſeeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlaſting Life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day*; Joh. vi. 40; which laſt words, that there might be no room for doubt concerning them, are repeated *no*

leſs

leſs than *four* times in that Chapter. Now that this promiſe ſhall certainly be ful- SERM.
filled, God hath given us aſſurance by raiſing up *him* before-hand to be the *firſt-* LXXVIII.
fruits from the dead: He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead; Acts xvii. 31. The Reſurrection of Chriſt is ſuch an earneſt and pledge of our reſurrection, as not only demonſtrates the *poſſibility* of the thing, but gives aſſurance alſo of the *certainty* of it: For, that the ſame power that raiſed up him, *can* alſo raiſe up us, is evident; and that it *will* do ſo, we are aſſured by *his* promiſe, who raiſed up Chriſt to that very end, that he might give us aſſurance that he would alſo *raiſe up us*. But here ſome man will ſay, *How are the dead raiſed up, and with what body do they come?* Which is the

2*d* Thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, namly, the *manner how the dead ſhall be raiſed*; and to *this queſtion* we may anſwer in the Words of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 36; *Thou fool, that which thou ſoweſt is not quickened except it die; And that which thou ſoweſt, thou ſoweſt not that body that ſhall be, but bare grain, ſuppoſe of wheat or of ſome other grain; But God giveth it a body as it hath pleaſed him, and to every ſeed his own body.* From which ſimilitude of the Apoſtle, we may ſafely collect theſe two things; 1*ſt*, That in the whole the ſame body which died, ſhall be raiſed again; 2*dly*, That yet it ſhall riſe with very great alterations. 1*ſt*, That in the whole, the ſame body which died, ſhall be raiſed again, appears in general from the Apoſtle's uſing the ſimilitude of Corn: *For as Corn groweth not indifferently out of any ground, but there muſt be ſeed ſown out of which it may ſpring, and therefore every ſort of grain produceth Corn of its own likeneſs and peculiar form*; So at the reſurrection, the bodies of them that ariſe, ſhall not be formed indifferently out of any matter, but the bodies that die, thoſe mortal and corruptible bodies, ſhall be in a figurative ſenſe as it were the ſeed and material principle of thoſe immortal and incorruptible ones, into which we ſhall then be quickened. Indeed whether in equity, and in order to a juſt retribution, it be neceſſary abſolutely in the nature of the thing, that the ſame Body ſhould be raiſed again, we cannot certainly tell; becauſe we know not diſtinctly how far the ſame body is neceſſary to conſtitute the ſame perſon. But though it cannot be proved that God is abſolutely bound in juſtice to unite the Soul to the ſame body from which it was ſeparated by death, yet that in fact he *will* do ſo, the expreſſions of Scripture concerning this matter do ſufficiently intimate: When the Apoſtle aſſures us, *that the body ſhall riſe again, and that He that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead ſhall alſo quicken our mortal bodies*, he does not ſay only that the Soul ſhall be again united to matter, but alſo that the *body* which died ſhall be quickened or made to live again; *For this corruptible muſt put on incorruption*, and *This* mortal *muſt put on immortality*; which is not ſaying only that the Soul, which was before united to a *mortal and corruptible body*, ſhall at the reſurrection be clothed with an *immortal and incorruptible one*; but that *This ſame body*, which is now mortal and corruptible, *ſhall then put on immortality and incorruption. To which* purpoſe it is affirmed in Scripture, *that the ſea ſhall give up the dead that are in it, and death and the grave ſhall deliver up the dead that are in them, and they that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall hear the voice of Chriſt and riſe*: And indeed, having one example of it in the reſurrection of Chriſt, and knowing that in all caſes it is as eaſy for God to raiſe the ſame Body as to frame a new one, no reaſon can be imagined why it ſhould not be ſo. But it is true, the *parts* of one body may poſſibly be ſo ſcattered and perhaps incorporated among the parts of another body, that it ſhall not be poſſible for every particular body to ariſe with juſt the ſame parts, of which it conſiſted at the time of its diſſolution: Neither is there any neceſſity at all either in nature or Scripture that it ſhould do ſo. How far therefore each body ſhall conſiſt exactly of the ſame matter, or what change of parts may be admitted, is a vain, empty and needleſs ſpeculation; a nicety, which as it is not poſſible for us to determine, *ſo* neither is it neceſſary for us to know: *Sufficient* it is to all wiſe and good purpoſes, that we believe and affirm with St. *Paul*, *that as out of a grain of corn ſown in the earth there ſprings an ear of the ſame kind; ſo from a mortal and corruptible body buried in the ground, there ſhall be raiſed an immortal and incorruptible one.* For 2*dly*; Though in the whole the ſame body that died ſhall be raiſed again, yet

SERM. LXXVIII.

ſhall it riſe with very great alterations: *As thou ſoweſt not that body that ſhall be, but bare grain, ſuppoſe of wheat or of ſome other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleaſed him; ſo alſo is the reſurrection of the dead.* What theſe alterations ſhall be, the Apoſtle tells us in the 42, 43 and 44*th* Verſes of this xv*th* Chapter of 1 Cor. *It is ſown in corruption it is raiſed in incorruption; it is ſown in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory; it is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power; it is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual body.* 1ſt. *It is ſown in corruption, it is raiſed in incorruption*; i. e. The body which has now in it ſuch manifeſt principles of mortality and corruption; which conſiſts now of ſuch brittle and tender parts, that every the leaſt violence diſturbs and unfits them for their operations; which is now ſubject to ſo many caſualties, and has its continuance depending upon the fit diſpoſition of ſo many little and eaſily diſordered parts, that it is a greater wonder how we continue to live a day than why we die after ſo few years ſpace; *this* body ſhall at the reſurrection be perfectly refined and purged from all the ſeeds of mortality and corruption; ſhall be made up of ſuch parts and ſo conſtituted, as ſhall neither in themſelves have any tendency to diſſolution, nor be capable of being any way diſordered and unfitted for their proper functions; in a word, ſhall ſpring up into an incorruptible and immortal ſubſtance, which ſhall be fitted to endure as long as the Soul to which it is to be united, even to all eternity. Again, *it is ſown in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory*; i. e. That body, which at death ſeems ſo baſe and abject, ſo vile and contemptible, ſhall at the reſurrection be transformed *into* a bright and beautiful and glorious body. Neither ought it at all to ſeem ſtrange to us, that it ſhould be capable of receiving ſo great a change; For if even in this mortal life the motions of the Soul, joy and hope, innocence and an aſſurance of the favour of God, can ſhew forth themſelves with ſo remarkable a Vigour, and as it were with a luſtre, in the countenances of men; if St. *Stephen*'s innocence and joyful aſſurance, could *make his face to appear as it had been the face of an Angel*; *and* Moſes's *converſing with God upon the Mount, could make his face ſo ſhine, that the Children of* Iſrael *were not able to look upon him for the brightneſs and glory of it*; how much greater change muſt the ſtrong and powerful operations of a glorified Soul, raviſhed with the beatifick viſion of God, make in a ſubtle, immortal and incorruptible body? But beſides this, we are moreover aſſured, that Our Saviour ſhall alſo by his immediate power, even by that mighty working *whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto himſelf, change this our vile body that it may be faſhioned like unto* his *glorious body*; Phil. iii. 21. And what ſort of body his glorious body is, may in ſome meaſure be gathered from the Hiſtory of his transfiguration, where his face is deſcribed *to have ſhined like the Sun, and his raiment to have become ſhining, exceeding white as ſnow, ſo as no fuller on earth could white them*; St. Matt. xvii. 2: compared with *Mar.* ix. 3: and from the deſcription of his appearance to St. *John*; Rev. i. 14: *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as ſnow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine braſs, as if they burned in a furnace.* Such therefore ſhall be the glorified bodies of the Saints at the reſurrection; namely, made like unto the glorified body of Chriſt. And this perhaps is what is intimated byour Saviour in that promiſe; St. Matt. xiii. 43: *Then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father*; and in that Prophecy of *Daniel*; ch. xii. v. 3: *They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs as the Stars for ever and ever*; and by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*; ch. iii. 6, 7: *As gold in the furnace has he tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering: They ſhall ſhine, and run to and fro like ſparks among the ſtubble: They ſhall judge the nations, and have dominion over the people; and their Lord ſhall reign for ever.* Further, *it is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power*; i. e. that body, which is now ſo weak and feeble, ſo ſubject to diſeaſes and indiſpoſitions, ſo ſlow, heavy and unactive, that it clogs the ſoul, and retards its ſpiritual flights and operations; ſhall then become ſo ſtrong and powerful, ſo active and vigorous, as even to be aſſiſting to the moſt ſpiritual motions of the Soul, to become every way a fit Organ and Inſtrument of its moſt exalted operations, and ſhall continue in that perfect health, ſtrength and vigour for ever: *For God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain; for the former things are paſſed away*; Rev. xxi. 4. Laſtly, *it is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual body*; i. e. That body

which

which is now fitted only for this animal life; which consists of such gross substance, and that in continual change, as needs perpetually to be repaired with the suitable nourishment of meats and drinks, to be sustained and kept in order with labour and exercise, and to be refreshed with such pleasures as are suitable indeed to this animal life, but are far beneath the excellent nature of the soul, and prove oft-times hurtful and injurious to it; *This body*, I say, shall at the resurrection become of a more refined and spiritual nature, shall be wholly delivered from all those wants and incumbrances which are now so necessary to the preservation of the animal life; and shall be entirely freed from all appetites to such pleasures, as are now the *snares* and temptations of the Soul. All which, our Saviour seems plainly to intimate, in that answer of his to a captious question proposed by the *Sadducees*; St. *Luke* xx. 35: *They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain That world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more, for they are equal or like unto the Angels.* Having thus explained the nature of the victory that Christ gives us over temporal death. SERM. LXXVIII.

2*dly*; I proceed now in the 2*d* place to consider the Victory which Christ shall give to all his faithful Servants over that death which is *eternal*: And of this, very briefly. The victory over temporal death shall be in some measure (as has been already observed) universal; For all shall rise again from the dead, and all both just and unjust shall be clothed with immortal and incorruptible *bodies* which shall never be dissolved any more: But though there shall be no more dissolution of the body, nor separation of the soul, yet is there a greater destruction into which they who *believe not God and obey not his Gospel shall at last fall*; and that is, the second death; Rev. xxi. 8: *The fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* Now from *this* death, those and those only shall be delivered by Christ, *who hear the Word of God and keep it; who hearken unto the commands of God, and in their lives obey them; They that overcome, shall not be hurt of the second death, for on them the second death hath no power, but they shall be Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him for ever*; Rev. ii. 11: compared with *Ch.* xx. *ver.* 6. And of this we must understand that promise of our Saviour; St. *Joh.* xi. 26: *whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die*; or (as the words may more properly be rendered) *shall not die for ever*; i. e. shall never fall into eternal death. That which Christ hath already done towards delivering his Servants from the power of this death, is his making provision for their deliverance from the dominion and from the guilt of Sin, of which this death is the consequence and punishment. That which still remains, and which he will yet do for them, is to acquit them publickly at the great day of judgment, and then in pursuance of that sentence of absolution, actually *to* instate them in his Kingdom of Glory. The resurrection of the dead is only in order to that final judgment, which shall pass upon all mankind; *for God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the World in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, even our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose appearance all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and live, and stand before his judgment-seat, and he shall judge them according to their works*: The solemnity of which great day, cannot be more lively expressed, than in those prophetick words of *Daniel*; Chap. vii. ver. 9: *I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the antient of days did sit, whose garment was white as the snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire; A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him, thousand thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the* judgment *was set, and the books were opened*: From which place most of the expressions which are made use of in the New Testament to signify the Second coming of Christ, are plainly borrowed. At this great Solemnity, all those who have embraced the gracious terms of the Gospel, and through the mercy of God have by Repentance and Obedience delivered themselves from the Power and Dominion of Sin, shall by their Saviour and Judge be publickly acquitted before Men and Angels, and pronounced free from the Guilt and from the Punishment of Sin: *For whosoever shall confess me before men*, saith our Saviour; *i. e.* whosoever shall not be ashamed of the Religion of Christ, but notwithstanding

SERM. LXXVIII.

notwithſtanding all the Diſcouragements he may meet with in the World, ſhall perſiſt in it and obey it, him *ſhall the Son of man confeſs before his Father which is in heaven, and before the angels of God, i. e.* he ſhall acknowledge him for his true and faithful Diſciple, and ſhall pronounce that bleſſed Sentence upon him, *Well done, good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* The Servants of Chriſt being thus publickly acquitted at the general Judgment, ſhall in purſuance of this Sentence enter with him into Heaven, and be actually inſtated in his Kingdom of *glory*; and ſo ſhall they ever be with the Lord. *This* is the conſummation of the Goſpel-œconomy, and the *accompliſhment* of the Kingdom of Chriſt: *Thus* Chriſt, having totally ſubdued all his Enemies, *ſhall for ever be glorified with his ſaints; and they ſhall* be *before the throne of God, and ſhall ſerve him day and night in his temple; and he that ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them: they ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on them nor any heat: for the lamb which is in the midſt of the throne ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and they ſhall for ever ſing that joyful ſong of praiſe;* Rev. i. 5: *Unto him that loved us and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Having thus at large explained how Chriſt gives his Servants the Victory over their laſt enemy, which is Death, I ſhall only draw an inference *or two* from what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude. And *1ſt*, If theſe things be ſo, then let us, as the Apoſtle infers in the words immediately following the Text, *be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as we know that our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* Our Saviour has aſſured us that if we be ſtedfaſt in our Religion, and perſevere in our Obedience to it, nothing ſhall by any means hurt us, but *we ſhall be more than conquerors over all our enemies, even over Death itſelf. I am,* ſaith he, *the reſurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live;* Joh. xi. 25. Now what greater encouragement can any man deſire than to be aſſured that his *labour ſhall not only not be in vain,* but that it ſhall alſo meet with a great and inexpreſſible reward? And what greater reward can poſſibly be propoſed, than deliverance from death and an entrance into life eternal? If then we in earneſt believe theſe things, as by our Religion we profeſs and pretend to do, let us alſo conſider them and urge them upon our ſelves; let us by frequent meditation, convince our ſelves of the truth and importance of them; and let us always ſo *live*, as being under the power of theſe convictions. Let not the terror of ſhort and temporary evils drive *us* into Sin, who are convinced that the conſequence of that ſin, will be miſery and death eternal; *and let not* the allurements of ſhort and tranſitory pleaſures withdraw *us* from our duty, who are convinced that the performance of that duty, will be life and happineſs for ever. The religion of Chriſt requires nothing of us but what is extremely reaſonable and manifeſtly for our advantage, namely, *to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World*; yet does it promiſe to obedience ſuch an infinite reward, as life from the dead, even life eternal; and he that will not by ſuch a motive be perſwaded to be ſtedfaſt in ſuch a religion, muſt have loſt all ſenſe, I do not ſay only of virtue and goodneſs, but alſo of his own intereſt and happineſs. *2dly*, If Chriſt has taken away the *ſting of death*, and gives us the victory over it; then good Chriſtians ought not to be afraid and terrified at death, any more than at an enemy that is already conquered, and can do them no hurt. *Chriſt hath both died for us and is riſen again*, and one great reaſon why he did ſo, was to aſſure us that as it was not poſſible for *him to be holden of death*, ſo neither ſhould we be detained by it; *for he took part of fleſh and blood, that through death he might deſtroy him that had the power of death*, i. e. *the Devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime ſubject to bondage*; Heb. ii. 14 and 15. Chriſt has made death to be nothing elſe but a paſſage unto life eternal, to all thoſe who ſhall obey his commandments; Let us then ſincerely endeavour to obey the commands of God, and death ſhall have no ſting, nothing that is terrible in it. He that has either from the beginning, or after true Repentance, made it the principal buſineſs of his life, to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly; may without fear expect the approach of *death*, nay even with joy and comfort hope for it. And this the generality of mankind

mankind are ſo ſenſible of, that tho' they deſire not to *be like the Servants of God in their lives*, yet they cannot but wiſh with *Balaam* to be like them in their deaths; Num. xxiii. 10; *let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.* SERM. LXXVIII.

3*dly* and *laſtly*, If Chriſt will give all his Servants victory over death, then we ought not to grieve immoderately at the death of our friends who die in the Lord. *I would not have you ignorant*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *concerning them that are aſleep, that ye ſorrow not even as others that have no hope; For if we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again, even ſo them alſo which ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him*; 1 Theſſ. iv. 13. If we believe that there ſhall be a reſurrection from the dead, we ought not to ſorrow immoderately for the departure of thoſe, who have left this wicked and miſerable world, *and are gone to reſt from their labours*? For ſo ſaith the Spirit of God, *Rev.* xiv. 13; *Bleſſed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth yea ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

SERMON LXXIX.

The Inexcuſableneſs of rejecting the Goſpel.

[*Preached on Whitſunday.*]

HEB. ii. 3 and 4.

How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will?

SERM. LXXIX.

THESE words contain an Account, how utterly inexcuſable all men are who neglect the Salvation of the Goſpel; either by rejecting it through Unbelief, when offered unto them; or by living unworthily of it, after they have pretended to embrace it. Many conſiderations there are, which highly aggravate the fault of ſuch perſons as contemptuouſly neglect the propoſal of a Favour, which 'tis both their duty and their greateſt intereſt to accept; and many circumſtances make them more and more inexcuſable, and juſtly to deſerve the ſevereſt puniſhment, for their ingratitude and contempt. The intrinſick *Goodneſs* and *Excellency* of the *Thing itſelf*, which they deſpiſe and neglect; the great *value*, the *neceſſity* and ſingular *importance* of it; the exceeding great *benefit*, which, by being duly received, it would bring along with it; and the Extreme *Evils* which are conſequent upon the neglect of it: The *Power* and *Authority*, the *Greatneſs* and *Goodneſs* of the Perſon, whoſe Favour we make light of; our Subjection to him and Dependance upon him, as our abſolute *Governor*; or our Obligations to him, as our greateſt *Benefactor*: The Dignity and Excellency of the *Perſon*, by whoſe *interpoſition* the Benefit is procured, and by whom it is conveyed

conveyed or ſent to us: The great *Difficulties* that were neceſſary to be underwent in order to obtain it, or the great Coſt that was requiſite to purchaſe it: The Strength and Clearneſs of the *Evidence*, and the Number and Greatneſs of the *Proofs*, made uſe of to aſſure us of the *Certainty* of it: All theſe are Circumſtances which greatly increaſe our Obligation, to accept with Thankfulneſs the Advantage propoſed, to make that due Uſe of it for which it was conferred, and be influenced by it in all the Actions of our Lives. And if we neglect or deſpiſe it, or behave ourſelves ill and unworthily under it; all the ſame circumſtances do highly aggravate our guilt, render us very inexcuſable, and make us juſtly to deſerve the ſevereſt of puniſhments for our ingratitude and contempt. To reject That, which in the nature of the *thing itſelf* is of the higheſt *Excellency and intrinſick Goodneſs*, is a Mark of the greateſt Depravity and Corruption of Manners. To deſpiſe That, which is of the laſt and utmoſt *importance* to us; on the due receiving, or on the neglecting whereof, depends the greateſt Happineſs or the extremeſt Miſery our Nature is capable of; is the greateſt Folly and Stupidity imaginable. To diſobey the Commands of our Supreme *Governor*, whoſe Power is abſolute, and his Authority uncontroulable; is the higheſt Inſolence; and to oppoſe the Will of our greateſt *Benefactor*, is the baſeſt Ingratitude: To ſlight and reject a gracious Propoſal of Mercy, procured for us by the interpoſition, and conveyed to us by the hands, of a Perſon of the greateſt Dignity and Excellency; and who was likewiſe in order thereunto, neceſſarily to condeſcend and ſubmit to undergo great Sufferings and Indignities; is the higheſt degree of *Perverſeneſs* poſſible. And to withſtand and not be convinced by ſuch Proofs, as both in Number, Strength, and Clearneſs, are the beſt and greateſt Evidence that can be expected or in reaſon deſired; is the utmoſt Obſtinacy, and moſt inexcuſably wilful Oppoſition to Truth. Now all theſe aggravating Circumſtances attend the rejecting, or (which is the very ſame thing) the diſobeying the Goſpel; and they are moſt of them contained in theſe words of the Apoſtle; *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will?* In the words,

1*ſt*, Here is the intrinſick Goodneſs and Excellency of the Thing itſelf, which wicked men reject; intimated as a juſt ground why they ſhould not eſcape unpuniſhed. It is in itſelf or in its own Nature a *great Salvation*; a Salvation from Sin and Miſery, from the Power and Tyranny of the Devil, and from the puniſhment of Death.

2*dly*, Here is a great Aggravation of the Sin of rejecting the Goſpel; in that it is a Salvation not only *great in itſelf*, but alſo offered unto us by expreſs revelation from *God himſelf*.

3*dly*, Here is the Dignity and Excellency of the Perſon, *by* and *through* whom this Salvation is propoſed to us; mentioned as a further Aggravation of the Sin of rejecting it. It was *at the firſt begun to be ſpoken by the Lord*.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*, The Strength and Clearneſs of the Evidence, and the Number and Greatneſs of the Proofs, made uſe of to aſſure us of the Truth and Certainty of the Goſpel; is of all others the *higheſt* Aggravation, of the Guilt of thoſe who neglect or diſobey it; and that which of all other circumſtances renders them the moſt utterly inexcuſable: *God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.* The principal and moſt remarkable of all which Signs and Wonders, being that plentiful Effuſion of the Holy Spirit upon the Apoſtles, which we *this day* commemorate; I ſhall therefore be very brief upon all the former Heads.

1*ſt*, Here is the *intrinſick Goodneſs and Excellency of the Thing itſelf*, which wicked men reject; intimated as a juſt ground why they ſhould not eſcape unpuniſhed. It is *in itſelf*, a *great Salvation*; a Salvation from Sin and Miſery, from the Power and Tyranny of the Devil, and from the puniſhment of Death. Sin, in its own Nature, even ſeparate from the conſideration of its being an obſtinate diſobeying the revealed Will of God, is in itſelf utterly unreaſonable and inexcuſable: 'Tis acting in oppoſition to the known reaſon and proportion of things; contrary to that eternal Order and Equity, which God has eſtabliſhed in the original conſti-

SERM. LXXIX.

tution

SERM. LXXIX.

tution of Nature; oppoſite to the Light of Reaſon, the dictates of Conſcience, the unprejudiced Judgment of our own Minds, the agreeing Opinion of all wiſe and good men, nay and even of bad men themſelves too; contrary to all our natural Notions and Apprehenſions, of the Attributes and Will of God; deſtructive to the publick Welfare and Happineſs of Mankind, the Health of our own Bodies, the Peace of our Minds, and the Support of our good Name and Reputation amongſt wiſe and reaſonable men: 'Tis a ſubjecting our reaſon to vile affections, to inordinate and brutiſh appetites, to diſorderly and ungoverned Paſſions; Which is the greateſt and the worſt ſlavery in the world; to ſee and approve what is good, and yet not be able to prevail with ourſelves to practiſe it; to be ſenſible of the deſtructive conſequences of Sin, and yet, through the Strength of evil Habits, continue under the power and dominion of it; To feel ourſelves deprived of our preſent Happineſs, and of our beſt hopes of all that is to come; and yet continue in the practice of ſuch Vices, as are the only Cauſes of all this Miſery: This is evidently the greateſt Miſery, and moſt ſlaviſh Bondage that can be. Now to have a way propoſed to us, of being delivered from this Body of Sin, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God; to have a method laid before us, of being reſcued from this Miſery, and put into a way of ſecuring both our preſent Happineſs and that which is to come: This is the Offer of a *great Salvation*; This whoever ſhall neglect, is abſolutely inexcuſable, and juſtly deſerves to fall into that Miſery, from which he would not accept a deliverance. The Light of Nature itſelf directs us thus far, and that which all true Philoſophy pretended to, was to convince men of the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of *endeavouring*, by all the helps of Reaſon and natural Religion, to deliver themſelves from this bondage and ſlavery of Sin. The Goſpel propoſes to us an infinitely more effectual way of obtaining this end, than any Philoſophy under the Light of Nature was ever able to do; ſhowing us moſt clearly the heinous Nature of Sin, and the dreadful Conſequences of it; all the Obligations of our Duty in a more clear and particular manner, and the infinite Advantage of complying with them; the true expiation of Sin, and the certainty of our Repentance being acceptable in the ſight of God, and effectual to obtain Pardon; and affording us ſufficient Helps and Aſſiſtances, to enable us to perform what it requires of us, in order to our future and eternal Happineſs. This is, in the Nature of the Thing itſelf, a *great Salvation*; and the neglecting of which, (even ſeparate from the Conſideration of the particular Diſhonour done to God by rejecting an immediate Revelation of his Will,) is intrinſically in itſelf a moſt inexcuſable Neglect, and juſtly deſerving the ſevereſt of Puniſhments.

But then 2*dly*, This further Conſideration, that the Goſpel is an *expreſs and poſitive revelation of the Will of God*, is a very high Aggravation of the Sin of neglecting *ſo great* a *Salvation*. He that deſires not to be delivered from the *Dominion* of Sin, and has no thirſt after a Life of *Righteouſneſs*; for *That very reaſon* deſerves not to be ſaved from the puniſhment of Sin, and is in his Nature unqualified for the Rewards of Holineſs. But when to this choice of Wickedneſs, there is added moreover a direct Contempt of God; when God has declared to men his Will by an immediate Revelation, and confirmed the Obligations of Nature by his poſitive Command; when he has offered us Pardon upon our ſincere Repentance, and vouchſafed us the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit to enable us to perform it, and promiſed us eternal Life upon our performance of it, and has obliged us to accept this Salvation under pain of the ſevereſt penalties; the wrath of God being now moſt expreſly revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men; After *all* this, to continue ſtill to deſpiſe ſo great Salvation, is adding Rebellion to our Sin, and with a high hand exalting ourſelves againſt God; it is an avowed deſpiſing and contemning his Authority, and expreſly declaring that we *will not have Him to reign over us*. If therefore Sinning barely againſt the *Law of Nature*, was ſufficient to conſign men to unavoidable Deſtruction; how ſhall *We* eſcape, if we continue to Sin both againſt Nature and Revelation? If the Servant that *knew not* his Lord's Will, was yet to be beaten with ſtripes, becauſe he did things in themſelves worthy of ſtripes; how much more ſeverely muſt They expect to be puniſhed, who do the ſame things in direct oppoſition to the expreſs Will and known Command of their Maſter?

Maſter? This was the Reaſon why God puniſhed the Sins of his own people the *Jews*, with greater Severity than thoſe of the Heathen: And ſo *Now* in like manner, whereas *the times of ignorance God winked at*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *Acts* xvii. 30; that is, he was leſs ſtrict and ſevere with men before the Revelation of the Goſpel; *Now*, on the contrary, under pain of his ſevereſt diſpleaſure, he peremptorily commands all men every where to repent; There being no excuſe left, nothing that can alleviate their condemnation, if men, *after* that the cleareſt Light is come into the World, will ſtill obſtinately continue in their works of Darkneſs. SERM. LXXIX.

3*dly*, The *Dignity and Excellency of the Perſon, by* and *through* whom this great Salvation is propoſed to us, is a further Aggravation of the Sin of rejecting it. It *was at firſt begun to be ſpoken by the Lord*; that is, as the ſame Apoſtle expreſſes it in the foregoing chapter, *God who at ſundry times and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son.* The Dignity of the Perſon, by whoſe interpoſition any Favour is procured, and by whom it is tranſmitted, ſhows both the Greatneſs and Importance of the Thing itſelf, and the Love and Condeſcenſion of the Original Author of it; And the neglecting it in this caſe, implies not only Folly, Inſolence, and Rebellion, but moreover, the greateſt Obſtinacy alſo, which no Authority can prevail over; and the baſeſt Ingratitude, which no Kindneſs or Condeſcenſion can overcome; Which therefore whoſoever is guilty of, muſt be confeſſed moſt juſtly to deſerve the ſevereſt of Puniſhments. This (the Ingratitude of rejecting a Mercy, offered with ſo much Love and Condeſcenſion, by the hands of a Perſon of ſo great Dignity,) is what Our Saviour compelled the *Jews* to acknowledge, and made them condemn themſelves for it with their own mouths, in the Parable of the Houſeholder; St. *Matt.* xxi. 33; *who having planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, firſt ſent his ſervants to receive the fruits of it; and when the husbandmen had reſiſted and ſlain the ſervants, he afterwards ſent his own* Son *to them ſaying, Surely they will reverence my Son; But* him *alſo they reſiſted and ſlew*: Whereupon when our Saviour appealed to the Phariſees themſelves, to judge *what it was fit for the Lord of the vineyard to do unto thoſe husbandmen*; They immediately replied, *He will miſerably deſtroy thoſe wicked men, and let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which ſhall render him the fruits in their ſeaſons*: Unwarily paſſing a juſt ſentence againſt Themſelves; that for rejecting the Goſpel preached by Chriſt himſelf, they deſerved a ſeverer condemnation, than their Fathers who had before rejected the preaching and admonitions of the Prophets. The ſame Argument is uſed by the Apoſtle, in the words immediately preceding the Text; *If the word*, ſaith he, *ſpoken by Angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall* we *eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by* the Lord? And ch. x. ver. 28; *He that deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without mercy: Of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the* Son of God? and ch. xii. 25. *See that ye refuſe not Him that ſpeaketh: For if They eſcaped not, who refuſed him that ſpake on Earth, much more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from Heaven.*

4*thly* and *Laſtly*, The *Strength and Clearneſs* of the *Evidence*, and the *Number and Greatneſs* of the *Proofs*, made uſe of to aſſure us of the Truth and Certainty of the Goſpel; is the higheſt Aggravation of the guilt of thoſe, who neglect or diſobey it; and that which of all other things renders them the moſt abſolutely inexcuſable. The Goſpel *was at firſt begun to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was* afterwards *confirmed to us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*; whereof that which we *This day* commemorate, was both the Foundation of all the reſt; and in itſelf alſo of the greateſt Efficacy and of the largeſt Extent.

The ſtronger the Evidence of any Truth be, the more inexcuſable is the making oppoſition to it. And the higheſt Aggravation of this crime, is, to continue to oppoſe a Truth, after the beſt and greateſt Evidence has been given of it, that the Nature of the Thing was capable of. Oppoſition in this caſe, againſt the greateſt Evidence that is reaſonably to be expected, can proceed from nothing but either incurable Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs; or a Love of ſome things,

SERM. LXXIX.

and a reſolution not to part with them, the keeping of which is inconſiſtent with the acknowledgment of the Truth. And this is plainly the Caſe of thoſe who reject the Goſpel, after the undeniable Evidences that have been given of the Truth of it by the *Teſtimony of the Spirit*. Their rejecting it, cannot proceed from want of ſufficient Conviction, but only from a love of Vice, and a reſolution not to be reformed; which is a degree of incorrigibleneſs, in which there is no *hope* of excuſe, and for which there remains no remedy; and which there is no hopes of amending. When clear Light is come into the World, and men ſtill continue their works of Darkneſs; then it becomes evident that their wickedneſs proceeds not from Ignorance and want of Inſtruction, but from Will and Choice; they love Darkneſs rather than Light, and ſtand in open defiance to God and his ſupreme Authority. This is what our Saviour ſays of the *Jews*; St. *Joh.* xv. 22; *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they had not had Sin; but now they have no cloak for their Sin: If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had Sin; but now they have both ſeen and hated both me and my Father.* This is the reaſon of his declaring to the cities of *Judæa, that it ſhould be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for Them*; becauſe *if the mighty works that were done in Them, had been done in Sodom, it would have repented in ſackcloth and aſhes.* This is the reaſon of his declaring to thoſe Phariſees, who blaſphemed the Holy Spirit, that *they ſhould never have forgiveneſs neither in this World, nor in that which is to come*; becauſe they reſiſted the laſt and greateſt means, that God would ever make uſe of to bring them to repentance; and not reſiſted it only, but reviled it alſo: They ſaw with their own eyes the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt proofs of the Truth of the Goſpel, that could poſſibly be given; and yet they not only withſtood the Evidence of thoſe mighty works, but alſo blaſphemed the Holy Spirit by which they were worked. Their Crime was ſingular and unexampled; and their Condemnation, was likewiſe ſingular. But all others alſo, who reject the Goſpel, are, in proportion to the greatneſs of the Evidence they reſiſt, and according to the degree of their Obſtinacy and Wickedneſs in ſo doing, inexcuſable in like manner, and Deſpiſers of the *Teſtimony of the Spirit*.

The *Teſtimony* which the Spirit of God has given to the Truth of the Goſpel, contains a great Variety of undeniable Proofs, which St. *Paul* calls *the Power and Demonſtration of the Spirit*. The many large and particular Prophecies, which from the beginning of the World were dictated by the *Spirit*, concerning the Perſon of our Saviour, and the Nature, Succeſs, and Effects of his Doctrine: The Conception of our Lord by the Miraculous Operation of the *Spirit*, and the manifold Wonders which attended his Birth: The Viſible Deſcent of the *Spirit* upon him at his Baptiſm, accompanied with a Voice from Heaven, declaring him to be the beloved Son of God: The Miracles which he worked during the courſe of his Miniſtry, by the *Spirit of God*; as the Scripture frequently expreſſes it: His Reſurrection from the Dead, which likewiſe the Scripture aſcribes to the Power of the ſame Spirit; *Rom.* viii. 11; and 1 *Pet.* iii. 18. But above all, that moſt plentiful Effuſion of the *Spirit* upon the Apoſtles at *Pentecoſt*; whereby they were indued with Power from on high, to preach the Goſpel with Authority and Efficacy; being enabled particularly to ſpeak with tongues, and to do even greater Works than our Saviour himſelf had worked upon Earth, according to his Promiſe which he made to them before his departure; Theſe *Teſtimonies* (I ſay) *of the Spirit of God*, contain ſuch demonſtrative Proof of the Truth of the Goſpel, as leaves *Them* who reject it, capable of no excuſe; ſince they deſpiſe the *laſt* and *greateſt* means, that *ſhall* be, or indeed *could* be made uſe of for their conviction and reformation. This laſt Miracle in particular, the *Gift of Tongues* to the Apoſtles, was of all others the ſtrangeſt, and in its nature and circumſtances the greateſt and moſt affecting that could be conceived. The Apoſtles, on whom this Gift was beſtowed, were men, whoſe Parentage and Education were well known to all that dwelt in *Jeruſalem*; They were known to be illiterate and mean perſons; Perſons whoſe Employment had been laborious, and their manner of life from the beginning, ſuch as afforded them neither Time nor Opportunities, of being ſkilled in the Learning and Cuſtoms of their *own* Country, much leſs of having ſtudied the languages of other Nations. Had they been men of a polite and learned educati-

on,

on, brought up in the ſtudy of their own Law, and in the ſchools of the Scribes and Phariſees; it might have been imagined that this their skill in foreign languages might be the Effect of Study and Induſtry, of Art and Deſign, in order to gain Applauſe from the people, and ſet themſelves up as Heads of new Sects, and Teachers of popular Doctrines. But ſo far from This was their caſe, that on the contrary they were deſpiſed and contemned by their own countrymen for that very reaſon, becauſe being well acquainted with their Education and manner of Life, they did not think it poſſible that any Wiſdom could be found in *Them*, or any Knowledge proceed from their lips. Exactly as they had formerly ſaid of their Maſter, when he went up into the Temple and taught: St. *Joh.* vii. 14; *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* And St. *Mar.* vi. 2; *From whence has this man theſe things? and what wiſdom is this which is given unto him? Is not this the carpenter the Son of Mary, the Brother of James and Joſes, and of Juda and Simon? and are not his ſiſters here with us?* Herein therefore conſiſted the Greatneſs of the Miracle, that men of no Education ſpake different languages *perfectly*; and that they did it *immediately and at once*, without any Time, Inſtruction, or Study. Neither was there any room for any Fallacy or Deceit in this matter: For this thing was not done in a Corner, but publickly in the midſt of *Jeruſalem*, and in the preſence of innumerable witneſſes; and that not *once* only, but with a continued and permanent Effect. The Witneſſes alſo that were preſent, were the beſt and moſt competent Judges that could be; being perſons of different Nations, gathered together at *Jeruſalem* upon account of the Feaſt, to whom all the languages which the Apoſtles ſpoke, were ſeverally natural; ſo that they could not be deceived, or impoſed upon in this whole proceeding. The Natives of *Jeruſalem*, who underſtood not the tongues which were ſpoken, nor knew whether they were really any languages at all; might indeed mock, and ſay that *theſe men* were *full of new wine*, Acts ii. 13; but the foreigners, who heard each his own proper language, could not but be juſtly filled with wonder and amazement. The Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, were witneſſes that the Apoſtles were illiterate men, and underſtood no language but their Mother-tongue, nor were capable of uſing any Art or Fraud in this matter; and the *Strangers* were witneſſes, that what they uttered were true and real languages, and therefore could not be the effect of wine or madneſs. The Teſtimony therefore of Both together, made the miracle certain, unqueſtionable and manifeſt; and accordingly the Effect of it, was proportionably great. For ſo we read; *Acts* ii. ver. 41; that *the ſame day, there were converted about three thouſand Souls*. This was the *immediate Effect* of the gift of Tongues at that very Time; and the *Uſefulneſs* of it *afterwards*, was peculiar and more remarkable, than of all other Miracles whatſoever. For this enabled the Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel to all Nations, with ſuch ſpeed and incredible ſucceſs, that though men of other Religions endeavoured to make Converts as well as they, and ſome Sects of the *Jews* particularly were infinitely induſtrious and would compaſs Sea and Land to gain a Proſelyte; yet the Preaching of the Apoſtles, *like the day ſpring from on high, like the morning-light, which in a moment diſpels the darkneſs from under one end of Heaven to the other*, propagated the Goſpel in a very few years to a vaſtly larger extent, than ever any other religion was propagated in the compaſs of many Ages. This gift of Tongues ceaſed indeed after ſome time, as other Miracles did; becauſe all theſe ſort of gifts were beſtowed not for their own ſake or intrinſick worth, but only in order to the propagation of the Goſpel, and to convince men of the Truth of that Religion, whoſe principal end and deſign conſiſted in thoſe gifts and graces of the Spirit which were to continue for ever. Which end being once obtained, and the Goſpel eſtabliſhed in the World, theſe miraculous gifts ceaſed; having been given, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *not for them that believe, but for them that believe not*. But thoſe gifts of the Spirit, in which conſiſts the renewal of the mind of man, and which are the Springs of all virtues which make us like unto God; theſe are to continue through all Ages; and are ſo much more excellent and more deſirable than the former, as the End is better and more excellent than the Means. In our Saviour's and in the Apoſtle's time, it was very natural to the Weakneſs of Men, to be moſt ambitious of ſuch gifts, as made the greateſt appearance, and could not but gain the greateſt eſteem and

applauſe

SERM. LXXIX.

applauſe in the eyes of the World: But our Saviour himſelf cautioned his Diſciples, *not to rejoice ſo much at their being indued with a power of working Miracles, as at their Names being written in Heaven:* And St. *Paul* afterwards took great pains to convince his hearers, *that though it was indeed lawful to covet miraculous gifts, yet he could ſtill ſhow unto them a more excellent way*; that it was a greater and far more deſirable thing, to inſtruct men in their plain and neceſſary duty, than to work the moſt ſtupendous miracle; *and that Love and Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, Meekneſs and Charity, were things more excellent and valuable in themſelves, than to be able to ſpeak with all the Tongues, either of Men or Angels.* The reaſon is plain, becauſe the one is beneficial only to *Others*, but the other to *ourſelves* likewiſe; He that works a Miracle or ſpeaks with Tongues to convince another, may yet poſſibly himſelf have no title to the rewards of the Goſpel; but He that is indued with thoſe gifts which are the end and deſign of the Goſpel, and for the ſake only of which all the reſt were given, does thereby ſecure his own Salvation, as well as promote the Salvation of others. Let us then by Charity and Goodneſs and the practice of all virtues ſecure to ourſelves that which is moſt excellent; and then though the gifts of Miracles be not continued to us, yet we ſhall obtain the End for which alone thoſe gifts have ever been given to Others. For, he that ſpeaks with Tongues for the converſion of others, may (without the *Virtues* of Meekneſs and Humility, Love and Charity,) himſelf poſſibly become a Caſtaway: But he whoſe Mind is indued with thoſe *inward* Virtues, which are the *more* excellent gifts and fruits of the Spirit, has attained that *End*, for the promoting of which, the other *outwardly brighter* and more reſplendent Gifts, were all intended but as *Means*.

SERMON

SERMON LXXX.

Different Tempers judge differently of Religion.

(Preach'd on Eaſter-Day.)

1 Cor. i. 22, 23, 24.

For the Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks ſeek after Wiſdom: But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the Power of God, and the Wiſdom of God.

SERM LXXX.

IN the following Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I ſhall *1ſt* explain diſtinctly the ſeveral Expreſſions contained in the Text; and *2dly*, I ſhall deduce ſome uſeful Inferences therefrom.

I. In order to Explain diſtinctly the ſeveral Expreſſions made uſe of in the Text, it is to be obſerved that the Doctrine therein contained, conſiſts plainly of the *three* following Heads. *1ſt*. That the great and general Difference, between the Humours or Tempers of the Nation of the *Jews* on *one* hand, and the

SERM. LXXX.

Greeks (who were Then the principal and moſt polite part of the *heathen* World) on the *other* hand, was This; That the *Jews*, in *Their* examination into the Truth of any Doctrine propoſed to them, were always apt to inſiſt preſently upon ſome *Miracle*, upon ſome *Token* to be ſhown them, in proof of the Doctrine's coming from *God*; Whereas the Temper of the *Gentiles* was, to expect conviction by *Diſputation and Argument*, according to the *Philoſophy* of the Times they lived in, which was eſteemed the *Wiſdom* of the Age then preſent: The *Jews require a* Sign, *and the Greeks ſeek after* Wiſdom. *2dly*; That Perſons of *Both* theſe Tempers, and that pretended to make uſe of each of theſe ways of judging, were generally extremely prejudiced againſt the Doctrine of the Goſpel: Inſomuch that the coming of Chriſt into the World, in the manner he did, in a mean, humble and lowly appearance, teaching a Doctrine of Morality, Plainneſs and Simplicity; was both a great Diſappointment to the *Jews*, who expected one that ſhould in a miraculous and pompous manner deliver them from their Enemies; and at the ſame time was no leſs diſagreeable to the then prevailing faſhion and method of the *Gentiles*, who judged of Doctrines by the Eloquence, and Oratory, and Artfulneſs in Diſputing, of Thoſe who taught and maintained them: *We preach Chriſt crucified, unto the* Jews *a* ſtumbling-block, *and unto the Greeks* Fooliſhneſs. *3dly*, That nevertheleſs, in Truth and Reality, ſetting aſide Prejudices and Corrupt Notions, the Doctrine of Chriſt was accompanied with the *higheſt* and *moſt compleat Evidence*, according to *Both* theſe *Methods* of judging: It was attended with the fulleſt Demonſtrations of Divine *Power*, in the *Miracles* God worked by him; And it had all real marks of *Wiſdom*, in its perfect agreeableneſs to the Dictates of true and Impartial *Reaſon*: *But unto them which are called, both* Jews *and* Greeks, *Chriſt the* Power *of God, and the* Wiſdom *of God.*

1ſt, The Great and general Difference between the Humours or Tempers of the Nation of the *Jews* on *one* hand, and the *Greeks* (who were Then the principal and moſt polite part of the *Heathen* World) on the *other* hand, the Apoſtle obſerves was This; That the *Jews*, in *Their* examination into the Truth of any Doctrine propoſed to them, were always apt to inſiſt preſently upon ſome *Miracle*, upon ſome *Token* to be ſhown them, in proof of the Doctrine's coming from *God*; Whereas the Temper of the *Gentiles* was, to expect conviction by *Diſputation and Argument*, in Methods anſwering to the *Philoſophy* of the Times they lived in, which was the Standard of *Wiſdom* of the Age then preſent: *The Jews require a* Sign, *and the Greeks ſeek after* Wiſdom. As to the Temper of the *Greeks* in this matter; nothing is more notorious in Hiſtory, than that about the Times of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, the things principally eſteemed among them were *Oratory* and the *Art of Diſputing*: *Oratory*, by which Things were ſet forth in a beautiful Light, adorned with proper figures, made pleaſing and acceptable to the Hearers by a Variety of agreeable expreſſions; And the *Art of Diſputing*, by which every thing could be *ſupported* with *ſome* plauſible *Arguments*, every thing could be *oppoſed* with *Some* ſeeming *Difficulties*, and every *Difficulty* could by men of Parts and Ingenuity have *Something* offered in *Reply* to it. Theſe Inſtances of Skill, in themſelves, and when applied to good Purpoſes were *Both of them* really uſeful and valuable. By *Oratory*, Truth and Right repreſented in a good View, and clothed in proper and agreeable expreſſions, appeared with a Greater Luſtre, and made more Advantagious Impreſſions: And by *Skill in arguing*, *Reaſon* was taught to exert itſelf in its full *Strength*, and *Truth* to ſhine forth in its peculiar and inimitable *Clearneſs*. But *more frequently*, among vicious and corrupt Men, theſe Inſtruments and Ornaments of Reaſon were perverted to very wrong and contrary Purpoſes. By *Oratory*, the *Deformity* of *unrighteous Practices* was covered with the deceitful Appearance, and painted over with the beautiful Colours of *Juſt and Right*: And by *Skill in diſputing*, the plaineſt *Truths* were *perplexed* with ſuch *Intricacies*, and the groſſeſt *Errors* concealed under ſuch *Forms of Arguing*, as altogether confounded, to common Underſtandings, the Difference between Truth and Error. This was what the corrupt Part of the *Greeks* called *Wiſdom*. As to the Temper of the *Jews*; They, having received their Law by Revelation from *God*, were never much accuſtomed either to value in *themſelves*, or to regard in *Others*, That nice and abſtract Reaſoning, which was all that the *Gentile* Philoſophers had to depend upon; The *Jews*, I

ſay,

ſay, never much attended to This ſort of Learning; But, whenever any Doctrine was propoſed to them which appeared to be New, immediately they inſiſted, that the Author of it ſhould, by working ſome *Miracle*, give evidence of his being ſent from *God*. Thus *Joh.* iv. 48: *Except ye ſee Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe:* And *Matt.* xvi. 1: *The Phariſees deſired him, that he would ſhow them a Sign from Heaven.* Nor were they to blame in ſo doing, when the Doctrine to which their Aſſent was expected, was propoſed to them as of *Divine Revelation*; and when their demanding ſuch evidence, did not proceed from any unreaſonableneſs or perverſeneſs of Temper, but from a ſincere Deſire of having ſuch Satisfaction, without which a reaſonable Perſon could not juſtify his Aſſent from being credulous and weak. But *more frequently*, under pretence of expecting Further Satisfaction, an obſtinate and malicious Temper perſiſted continually in requiring more and more Signs, for no other reaſon but becauſe they reſolved *not to be convinced*, being *like the Deaf Adder which ſtoppeth her ears, which refuſeth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely.* Which Sort of perſons, our Saviour reproves therefore with a very juſt and proper Severity; *Matt.* xii. 39: *An evil and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a Sign, and there ſhall no Sign be given it, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the Whale's belly, ſo ſhall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the Heart of the Earth: The men of Nineveh ſhall riſe up in judgment with this generation, and ſhall condemn it; becauſe They repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here: The Queen of the South ſhall riſe up in judgment with this generation, and ſhall condemn it; for ſhe came from the uttermoſt parts of the Earth to hear the wiſdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here.* The Meaning is: God had given them Signs abundantly ſufficient, to convince any reaſonable and unprejudiced perſons; wherewith if they would not be ſatisfied, he would leave them to themſelves. And this may ſuffice for explication of the *firſt* part of the Text, the *General Obſervation* concerning the *different Temper* or *Humour* of the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* Nations: *The Jews require a* Sign, *and the Greeks ſeek after* Wiſdom.

SERM. LXXX.

2*dly*, The *Second* Particular in the Text, is the Obſervation, that Perſons of *Both* theſe Tempers, and that pretended to make uſe of *Each* of theſe ways of judging, were generally extremely prejudiced againſt the Doctrine of the Goſpel: Inſomuch that the coming of Chriſt into the World, in the Manner he did, in a mean, humble, and lowly appearance, teaching a Doctrine of Morality, plainneſs and ſimplicity; was both a great Diſappointment to the *Jews*, who expected one that ſhould in a miraculous and pompous manner deliver them from their Enemies; and at the ſame time was no leſs diſagreeable to the then prevailing Faſhion and Method of the *Gentiles*, who judged of Doctrines by the Eloquence, and Oratory, and Artfulneſs in Diſputing, of Thoſe who taught and maintained them: *We preach Chriſt crucified, unto the* Jews *a Stumbling-Block, and unto the* Greeks *Fooliſhneſs.* The *Jews* thought that no other *Sign* was a Mark of the true Meſſias, but *Delivering them from their Temporal Enemies*; and that the *Power of God* could no otherwiſe be manifeſted in him, than by eſtabliſhing him a *Kingdom in this World.* When therefore our Lord came in *Another* manner, preaching *humility* and *meekneſs*, *patience* and *charity*; calling them to *virtue* and *goodneſs*, inſtead of *Earthly Power and Dominion*: Though they were aſtoniſhed at the Excellency of his Doctrine, and at the Greatneſs of his Works; and wondered, *whence has This man this wiſdom, and thoſe mighty works*; yet preſently they ſay, *Is not this the Carpenter's Son? Is not his Mother called Mary? and his Brethren, James and Joſes, and Simon and Judas? and his Siſters are they not all with us? whence then has this man all theſe things? and they were offended in him*, Matt. xiii. 15. Nay, even his *Own Diſciples*; whenever he began to ſpeak to them of his *Sufferings* and Death, immediately they *rebuked him, ſaying, Be it far from thee, Lord; This ſhall not be unto thee.* And when he had actually ſuffered, they ſaid with a deſponding heart, *We truſted that it had been He which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael*; Luke xxiv. 21. And even after they were ſatisfied of the Truth of his *Reſurrection*, yet ſtill their antient Prejudices put them upon ſeeking after the ſame *Sign* or Token as before; *Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore again the Kingdom to Iſrael?* Acts i. 6. So that, conſidering how great a *Stumbling-block* This Circumſtance was to the whole

Matt. xvi. 22

SERM. LXXX.

whole Nation of the *Jews*, it was with very good reaſon that our Lord pronounces; *Matt.* xi. 6: *Bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.* As to the *Gentiles*; They, as I now obſerved, being uſed to judge of Doctrines by the *Eloquence*, and *Oratory*, and *Artfulneſs in Diſputing*, of thoſe who taught and maintained them; it is no wonder that the Plainneſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel, which took no care to pleaſe and entertain them with artificial compoſitions, nor to try their Parts and gratify their Vanity, with nice and ſubtle Diſputations, but aimed wholly at reforming their Manners, and withdrawing them from idolatrous Imaginations to the Service of the One Living and True God, in Holineſs, Righteouſneſs and Charity; it is no wonder, I ſay, that this Plainneſs and Simplicity of Doctrine was offenſive to *Them*, as it is *Now* to *All* ſorts of men who place religion in Forms and Ceremonies, and in certain Syſtems of Opinions of which they underſtand little; nor ought it at all to ſeem ſtrange, that the *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks*, Acts xvii. 18, ſhould encounter St *Paul* with That contemptuous queſtion, *What will this Babler ſay?* This therefore is the *Second* Obſervation contained in the Text; that Perſons of ſuch different *Tempers*, and that made uſe of ſuch different *ways of judging*, as the *Jews* and *Gentiles* did, were yet both of them under very *Great Prejudices* againſt the Doctrine of the Goſpel: *We preach Chriſt crucified, unto the* Jews *a Stumbling-block, and unto the* Greeks *Fooliſhneſs.*

dly, The *Third* and Laſt Obſervation contained in the Text, is; that notwithſtanding theſe pretended Objections, yet, in Truth and Reality, ſetting aſide Prejudices and corrupt Notions, the Doctrine of Chriſt was accompanied with the *higheſt* and *moſt compleat evidence*, according to *Both* the fore-mentioned *Methods* of judging: It was attended with the fulleſt Demonſtrations of Divine Power, in the *Miracles* God worked by him; And it had all real Marks of *Wiſdom*, in its perfect Agreeableneſs to the Dictates of true and impartial *Reaſon*: *But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the* Power *of God, and the* Wiſdom *of God.* As to the *Jews*; (who, in judging of the Truth of any Doctrine, always inſiſted principally upon *Proofs* or *Tokens* of the Teacher's *Authority*, upon *Signs* or *Evidences* of his being *ſent from God*; To the *Jews*, I ſay, The numerous particular and diſtinct *Prophecies* which were fulfilled in the Perſon of our Saviour, and in Him Only; beſides all ſuch as were typical, and had any Ambiguity in them: And the *Miracles* which he worked during the Courſe of his Miniſtry, nothing inferiour nor leſs conſpicuous than thoſe by which *Moſes* of old proved the Truth of his Commiſſion; Theſe were *abundant Evidence*, in their *Own way*; Evidence, to Them, who *required a Sign*, than which no greater Sign could poſſibly be given, of the immediate interpoſition of the *Power of God.* For whereas our Lord's coming in a *mean Eſtate*, was ſo great a *Stumbling-block* to them; and the principal *Sign* they expected, was his ſetting up a *temporal Kingdom* with Great *Power and Glory*: This, in Truth and Reality, would have been but a *ſmall* manifeſtation of the Power of God, in compariſon of that which has and will be ſhown forth by the *ſpiritual* Kingdom he has eſtabliſhed. For how *poorly* would the great Promiſes of God made to *Abraham*, and the *Patriarchs*, and to good men in all Ages; how *poorly*, and in how *low* a ſenſe, would thoſe Promiſes have been fulfilled to *Them*, barely by giving their *Poſterity*, Many Ages after *Their* Deceaſe, a *temporary* Kingdom; in compariſon of that glorious accompliſhment of them in Chriſt's *ſpiritual* Kingdom, wherein *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, and all the faithful Servants of God who have lived in all Ages, ſhall *themſelves literally* and *perſonally* inherit the Promiſes. Upon which account, the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* elegantly obſerves; *Heb.* xi. 16: *Wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called Their God; For he hath prepared for Them*, not for their *Poſterity* only, when they themſelves were to be no more; but) *for* Them *hath he prepared a City.* On the Other Hand, as to the *Gentiles*, who affected to depend entirely on *Reaſon and Arguments*; the Goſpel, though it deſpiſed the Vanity of *Oratory*, and choſe not to recommend itſelf in the ſet Forms of artificial and perplexing *Diſputation*; (for which cauſe it ſeemed *Fooliſhneſs* to conceited Philoſophers;) yet in point of *True Reaſon*, *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, it approved itſelf to be a Doctrine in all Reſpects Excellent, and truly worthy of God: *Chriſt*, the *Wiſdom*, as well as the *Power*, of God. By the *Goſpel*, All the Great Truths of Natural Religion, diſcoverable by

by Reaſon and Argumentation the Being and Attributes, the Government and Providence of God, the Unalterableneſs of Moral Obligations, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Expectation of future Rewards and Puniſhments; all theſe Great Truths (I ſay) diſcoverable in good meaſure by Argumentation and Reaſon, were by the *Goſpel* more plainly and expreſly revealed, more diſtinctly and clearly explained, more ſtrongly and powerfully inforced. And the *additional* Revelation of *Chriſt*'s being appointed an *Interceſſor* for penitent Sinners, and the *Judge* of the World; was an advantagious confirmation of all the ſame Truths, and a moſt wiſe and proper encouragement to the practice of Virtue. By This means, a well-atteſted Interpoſition of Divine *Authority*, became unto All men a juſt ground of Aſſent to thoſe Truths, which to make out by the Help of Reaſon only, was a Work of Difficulty, Time, and Study. By This means, Inſtruction in matters of Religion became very *ſhort* and *eaſy*, even to the Meaneſt Capacities. And whereas the *Beſt and Greateſt Philoſophers* were in continual Diſputes, and in many degrees of Uncertainty, concerning the very fundamental and moſt important Doctrines of Truth and Reaſon; Among thoſe on the contrary, who have embraced the Goſpel of *Chriſt*, there never was the leaſt room for Diſpute about Any *Fundamental*; All Chriſtians, at all Times, and in all Places, having ever been baptized into the Profeſſion of the Same *Faith*, and into an Obligation to obey the Same *Commandments*. And it being notorious, that all the Contentions that ever aroſe in the Chriſtian World, have been meerly about the ſeveral *Additions*, which every Sect or Party, in direct contradiction to the expreſs Command of their Maſter, have endeavoured preſumptuouſly to annex, by their *Own* Authority, to *His* Doctrines, and to *His* Laws. How *much* therefore, and how *juſt* ground ſoever, has been given by thoſe who Call *themſelves Chriſtians*, to the Reproach of *Them which are without*; yet *Chriſt himſelf*, that is, the Goſpel in its native Simplicity as delivered by *Him*, has abundantly, to all *Reaſonable* perſons among the *Gentiles*, manifeſted itſelf to be the *Wiſdom* of God; as well as it appeared to be the *Power* of God, in Signs and Wonders unto the *Jews*. *Unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the* Power *of God and the* Wiſdom *of God.*

SERM. LXXX.

II. The Words and Doctrine of the Text being thus largely explained, it remains that I conclude with drawing two or three uſeful Inferences from what has been ſaid.

And 1*ſt*, From hence it appears, how Fooliſh it is to endeavour, as ſome have done, to oppoſe *Reaſon* and *Revelation* to each other. For *both* of them, are the glorious Gifts of God; and *Each* of them eſtabliſhes and confirms the Other. The Quibbling indeed, and vain Methods of Diſputing, among the greater part of the Heathen Philoſophers; were only *Shadows* of *Reaſoning*, falſely ſo called. But *True Reaſon*, is the Great Glory of Human Nature: And upon account of the *Goſpel*'s Agreeableneſs to *This*, it is, that the Apoſtle in the Text gives it that High Character, of being the *Wiſdom* as well as the *Power* of God. To imagine *Reaſon* and *Revelation* at variance with each other, is the like abſurdity, as ſuppoſing the *Eye* to *ſee* contrary to what the *Ear hears*, or that God ſhould make *One* Senſe, or Faculty to contradict *another*. Vain *men* may poorly and weakly fancy, that they can ſometimes promote *One* Truth at the Expence of *Another*: But the Works of *God*, are uniform and conſiſtent, of a piece from One end to the other: And what our Saviour ſays concerning *Perſons*, acting wiſely and uſefully in *different* ways; that *Wiſdom is juſtified of All her* Children; may equally be applied to *Things* likewiſe, that *Wiſdom is juſtified in All her* Diſpenſations.

2*dly*, If the *Power and Authority*, as well as the *Wiſdom* of God; that is, if *Divine Revelation*, as well as *argumentative Proof*; be a juſt Ground of Aſſent, or Evidence of Truth: Then ought we always to take great heed, leaſt at any time we *weaken* the Strength of that Authority, by blending things of *Human* invention with thoſe whoſe inſtitution is *Divine*. For whereas weak men think, by means of ſuch confuſion, to *ſtrengthen*, their *Own* Authority with the mixture of *Divine*; the Real Effect, on the contrary, always is, that the things of *Divine Authority* are inſenſibly *weakned*, by being made leſs diſtinguiſhable from what is meerly *Human*.

SERM. LXXX.

3*dly* and *laſtly*, From the manner in which *Chriſt* is here called *The Wiſdom* and *The Power* of God, we may learn rightly to underſtand *Other* the like figurative expreſſions frequently found in Scripture. For as Chriſt is here ſtiled the *Wiſdom* of God, becauſe his Goſpel is agreeable to True *Reaſon*; and the *Power* of God, becauſe his Doctrine was confirmed by mighty *Works and Miracles*: So, in Other places, he is ſtiled The *Word* of God, becauſe he is the *Revealer* of his Will to Men; and he is the *Way*, the *Door*, the *Truth* and the *Life*, becauſe he has diſtinctly made known to us the Terms and Means of Salvation. And by the like figure of Speech, the Sacramental Bread and Wine is ſtiled the *Body and Blood of Chriſt*, becauſe it is a Solemn *commemoration of his Death*. And *Chriſtians* are by the Apoſtle ſaid to be the *Circumciſion made without hands*, becauſe they *ſpiritually* are, what the *Jews* were *typically* by *Circumciſion which was literal*. And *Praiſe* or *Thankſgiving* has the name of *Sacrifice* given to it, becauſe it is a Signification of the ſame Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, which Sacrifices were intended to expreſs, and which alone made thoſe Sacrifices acceptable before God. With many other the like Inſtances: In which, a careful conſideration of the ground and reaſon of the Manner of Expreſſion, may eaſily prevent Great Miſunderſtandings of Many Paſſages in Scripture.

SERMON

SERMON LXXXI.

Of the Reſurrection of CHRIST.

[*Preached on Eaſter-day.*]

1 COR. XV. 14.

And if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith alſo is vain.

THE great Foundation of our Hope of Immortality, is the Revelation of the Goſpel; and the great Evidence of the Truth of that Revelation, is the Reſurrection of Chriſt. Without the Revelation of the Goſpel, our Hope of Immortality, according to mens different Abilities in philoſophical Speculations, had continued diſputable; and, without the Reſurrection of Chriſt, the Proofs of the Truth of the Goſpel Revelation had been finally fruſtrated. As therefore the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, is of the greateſt importance to mens Souls, *in the whole*; ſo the Proof of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, is of the greateſt importance towards ſecuring the Certainty of that Revelation, *in particular*. By the Light of *Nature*, the Being and Attributes of God, were certain and demonſtrable; the Probability of a Future State, was great and undeniable; the Expectation of God's dealing mercifully with

SERM. LXXXI.

with penitent Sinners, was reaſonable and hopeful. But by the Revelation of the *Goſpel* only, was this great Hope *ſecured* to us; the Pardon of Sin declared *authentickly*, by the Authority of God; Life and Immortality brought to light by *Teſtimony*, as well as by rational Arguments; the Rewards and Puniſhments of Eternity, *diſtinctly* ſet forth; and the particular Method of the final Judgment, *affectionately* repreſented to us.

In like manner, as to the *Evidence* of the *Truth* of This Revelation; By the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, it was long before predicted; By the reaſonableneſs of the Doctrine itſelf, it was made very credible; By the Witneſs of our Lord and his Apoſtles, it was ſtrongly atteſted; by the conviction and ſilencing of its Adverſaries, it was confirmed and eſtabliſhed; By many Signs and Wonders and mighty Works done by Chriſt in his Life, it was *for the preſent* proved beyond contradiction; But by this *laſt* Evidence only, by the *Reſurrection of our Lord from the Dead*, was it for ever aſcertained to all generations. For had this *laſt* Proof failed, all the reſt muſt in courſe have fallen with it. The Prophecies would have appeared wonderful, but never fulfilled; The Doctrine would have continued reaſonable, but its Author periſhed; The Miracles of his Life would have remained aſtoniſhing, but ſtill confuted by his Death; His *Enemies* would have continued to inſult him, as did the *Jews*; *he ſaved others, himſelf he could not ſave*: And his *Friends*, that loved his Doctrine, and hoped for the Salvation of God, could *but* have joined with his deſponding Diſciples; *we* truſted *it had been he which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael*. In a word, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it in the Text, had *not Chriſt riſen* again, then had *our* whole *Preaching been vain, and your Faith alſo* in *vain*.

The Reſurrection of Chriſt therefore, being a Fact of ſo great importance, on which the Evidence of the Truth of the *whole* Revelation finally depended; it was neceſſary, in the Wiſdom of Providence, and in the Reaſon of Things, that the Proof of this great Fact ſhould be made unanſwerably ſtrong. In the following Diſcourſe therefore, I ſhall 1*ſt* endeavour to ſet before you briefly, and in one view, the particulars of that great and ſingular Care, which was taken to make the *Proof* of the Fact undeniable, that our Saviour *did really* riſe from the Dead. 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider what were the *Effects* of This his Reſurrection, with reſpect to *Chriſt himſelf*; and 3*dly*, what were the Effects of it with regard to *Us*.

Firſt, As to the extraordinary Care that was taken, to make the *Proof* of the Fact itſelf undeniable, that our Saviour *did really* riſe from the Dead; there was (1*ſt*,) in the *firſt* place Notice given of it *antecedently*, by the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament delivered long before. *Pſ.* xvi. 10; *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell*, that is, in the State of the Dead; *neither wilt thou ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee Corruption*. That This was an expreſs Prediction of our Saviour's Reſurrection; the Apoſtles, in their application of it in the Book of the *Acts*, ſhow by the following Argument. The words thus ſpoken by *David*, muſt of neceſſity be meant, either of *Himſelf*, or of ſome *Other Perſon*. Of *Himſelf*, they could not literally be meant, becauſe it was not *true* that *He* was raiſed before he ſaw corruption. And if they were meant of any *other Perſon*, the *Jews themſelves* (notwithſtanding all their Prejudices) would readily acknowledge, that That *other Perſon* ſo mentioned by way of Eminence, could, according to the Analogy of the Prophetick writings, be *no other* than the Meſſiah. This Argument is ſtrongly urged by St. *Peter*; Acts ii. 29; *Men and Brethren, let me freely ſpeak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this day*; That is, *He* did certainly ſee corruption: But *being a Prophet, and knowing that God had ſworn with an Oath to him, that of the fruit of his Loins according to the Fleſh, he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit on his throne; He, ſeeing This before, ſpake of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, that his Soul was not left in Hell, nor his fleſh did ſee corruption.* And by St. *Paul* in the ſame book; *ch.* xiii. 36; *David* (ſays he) *after he had ſerved his own generation by the will of God, fell on ſleep, and was laid unto his Fathers, and* ſaw *corruption*: *But he whom God raiſed again, ſaw* no *corruption*: Therefore theſe words of the Pſalmiſt, *Thou ſhalt not ſuffer thine Holy One to ſee corruption*, were ſpoken, not of *David* himſelf, but of the Reſurrection of Chriſt. After This, and other antient Prophecies; there were, (2*dly*,) in the *next* place plain Notifications given by our *Lord himſelf*, to his Diſciples before his

his Suffering; that they ſhould *expect* his Riſing from the Dead. And becauſe it was a matter of the *greateſt Importance*, he therefore *repeated* This Admonition to them ſeveral times. Firſt, *before* his Transfiguration; (Matt. xvi. 21;) *From that time forth began Jeſus to ſhow unto his Diſciples, how that he muſt —— ſuffer many things, —— and be killed, and be* raiſed again *the third day.* Then again, *after* his Transfiguration; ch. xvii. 9;) *As they came down from the Mountain, Jeſus charged them to tell no man the viſion, till the Son of man be* riſen *again from the dead.* Again, at his *laſt* going up to Jeruſalem; (ch. xx. 17;) *he took the twelve diſciples apart in the way, and ſaid unto them.—The Son of man ſhall be betrayed unto the chief Prieſts, —— and they ſhall condemn him to death, —— and the third day he ſhall* riſe *again.* Beſides which plain admonitions to his *Diſciples*, he gave ſome obſcure Hints of it to the *whole People* alſo; when, upon the *Jews* requiring of him a Sign, at *one* time he ſaid unto them, (Joh. ii. 19;) *Deſtroy this Temple, and in three days I will raiſe it up:* and at *another* time; (Matt. xii. 39;) *To an evil and adulterous generation, there ſhall no Sign be given, but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas; For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the Whale's belly, ſo ſhall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the Heart of the Earth.* The *Deſign and Uſe* of which Predictions, though not at all underſtood at the time they were ſpoken, is declared to us by the Evangeliſt; Joh. ii. 22; *When therefore he was riſen from the dead, his diſciples remembred that he had ſaid this unto them; and they belived the Scripture, and the word that Jeſus had ſaid. And* Luke xxiv. 6; *Remember*, ſaid the Angel to the perſons which came firſt to the Sepulchre, Remember *how he ſpake unto you, —— ſaying, the Son of Man muſt be delivered into the hands of ſinful men, and be crucified, and the third day riſe again; And they remembred his words.* Further; (*3dly.*) in order to make the Proof of his Reſurrection ſtill more evident, the *Place* and *Manner* and *Circumſtances* of his Burial, were by Providence directed to be particularly remarkable. Mark xv. 42; *Joſeph of Arimathea, an honourable Counſellor, begged his Body, and wrapped it in fine Linnen, and laid it in his own Sepulchre*; And this in the preſence of ſeveral of *Jeſus*'s Followers; who thereupon reſolving to come and embalm him, were providentially directed to become Witneſſes of many Circumſtances attending his *Reſurrection. Laſtly*, The Method which his *Adverſaries* themſelves took, to find evidence (as *they* thought) of the *Impoſture*; *making the Sepulchre ſure, ſealing the Stone, and ſetting a Watch*; Matt. xxvii. 66;) was by Providence deſigned on the contrary, to become a ſtrong Proof of the *Truth* of his Reſurrection; taking away all pretence or poſſibility of that plauſible Objection, that *his Diſciples came by Night and ſtole him away.*

Theſe are the principal Inſtances of the Care that was taken in the Circumſtances *going before* our Lord's Reſurrection, to render the Proof of the Fact certain and undeniable. *After* his Riſing again, the accumulative evidence of the Truth of his being riſen, is much greater, not only than what Unbelievers, but even than Believers themſelves, without putting *together* the numerous Circumſtances recorded in different places of Scripture, can eaſily imagine. (*1ſt*,) In the *firſt* place, an *Earthquake* terrified the *Watch*, and the Appearance of an *Angel made them become as dead men*; Matt. xxviii. 2. Then, (*2dly*,) the perſons who came with a deſign to *embalm* the Body, ſaw likewiſe an Angel, and were told by him that their Lord was riſen from the Dead; ver. 6. Immediately after this, *Jeſus himſelf* appeared to them, and comforted them; ver. 9. To which St. *John* adds this particular circumſtance, ch. xx. 17; that when one of them embraced his *Feet*, rejoicing and worſhipping him upon his diſcovering himſelf who he was, he ſaid unto her, *Touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended to my Father.* Which words moſt Interpreters ſo underſtand, as if they ſignified, *Do not detain me Now, as if you thought I was immediately leaving you; For I ſhall continue with you ſome time, and am not preſently aſcending to my Father.* But I think the truer meaning of them is, *Do not expect I ſhould continue with you* Now; *for it is expedient and neceſſary, that I firſt aſcend to my Father.* And therefore he adds in the very next words; *But go to my brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.* Tell them, *that I am riſen from the Dead, never to die any more; that I am about to return to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, to receive full Power over all things*

SERM. LXXXI.

both in Heaven and Earth, and to prepare a place for you; *and* Then, *where* I *am, there ſhall* ye *be alſo*. After This, (3*dly*,) he appeared to *Two* of his Diſciples going to *Emmaus*; Luke xxiv. 13, and talked with them, and *expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himſelf*. Then again (4*thly*,) he ſhewed himſelf to *Peter* alone, ver. 34; and 1 *Cor.* xv. 5. Then (5*thly*,) to St. *James*, ver. 7. After That, (6*thly*,) to *Seven* of the Apoſtles together; *Joh.* xxi. 2. Then (7*thly*,) to *Ten* of Them, *Thomas* only being abſent, *Joh.* xx. 19. And, (8*thly*,) a week after, to *all the Eleven*; ver. 26. *Thomas* being *preſent* with them; whoſe doubting Faith he vouchſafed to confirm, by ſuffering him to handle him; yet at the ſame time pronouncing a greater Bleſſing upon thoſe who ſhould *not ſee*, and yet would *believe*; Not that *Credulity* or *Believing without reaſon*, is in any caſe commendable; but, that believing, upon reaſonable and good evidence, things not obvious to Senſe; ſuch as are the Being of the *Inviſible* God, the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State which now are likewiſe *inviſible*, and the Coming of our Saviour to Judgment, though he does not preſently appear; are the moſt valuable Acts of Religious Faith and Dependance upon God. *Laſtly*, After theſe ſeveral more *private* appearances of our Lord to his Apoſtles, *he was ſeen* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *of above five hundred brethren at once*; 1 Cor. xv. 6: *of whom* though *ſome were fallen aſleep*, yet *the greater part remained* alive *unto* that *preſent* time, when St. *Paul* wrote this Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. And in This manner continued he for *forty days* together, *ſhowing himſelf alive after his paſſion by many infallible Proofs, and ſpeaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*; Acts i. 3. After which, at mid-day, in the preſence of all the Apoſtles, he was taken up from them viſibly into Heaven; *ver.* 9. And they were told by Angels, *ver.* 11, what *he* alſo *himſelf* had before told them in his Life-time, that in like manner as they ſaw him *go* into Heaven, ſo from thence likewiſe ſhould they ſee him *come*, at the end of the World, with Power and great Glory, even in the Glory of his Father, and all his Holy Angels with him, to judge the Quick and Dead with a righteous and unerring Sentence, rendering to every man impartially according to his Works. Put all This Evidence now together, and let it be conſidered fairly in one View; Evidence given by ſo many different *Perſons*, repeated at ſo many different *Times*, diverſified with ſuch variety of *circumſtances*, yet all agreeing in ſuch a perfect Uniformity as to the *Thing itſelf*. And was there ever more undeniable Proof given, of any matter of Fact in the World? Nevertheleſs, after all This, he appeared again to St. *Stephen*: Acts vii. 55. And again to St. *Paul*, as he himſelf teſtifies, 1 *Cor.* xv. 8. *Laſt of all* (ſays he) *he was ſeen of* Me *alſo, as of one born out of due Time*. Beſides all which *Cloud of Eye-witneſſes*, the Truth of our Lord's Reſurrection continued moreover to be proved, by the *Miracles* which the *Apoſtles* worked in his Name; *i.e.* through *his* Power and Authority; Alſo by the *Prophecies* he himſelf delivered, both before and after his Suffering. The gradual fulfilling of which Prophecies in all ſucceeding times, has been and *is* a ſtanding Proof of our Lord's being truly riſen, and that he *is* inveſted with all Power, to accompliſh whatever he has foretold. He clearly predicted, in the fulleſt and moſt diſtinct manner, the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the Deſolation of the whole *Jewiſh* Nation: Which Nation ſhould yet nevertheleſs continue in Being (as we ſee in fact it does at this day,) *till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*; Luke xxi. 24. He foretold, that his Diſciples ſhould be hated both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and perſecuted from one City to another. That nevertheleſs their Doctrine ſhould ſpread over the whole Earth, and, by the mere Force of Truth and Reaſon, of Goodneſs and Charity, ſhould prevail over all the Violence, and be eſtabliſhed againſt all the Oppoſition of human Authority. That after having ſo prevailed over all *outward* Enemies, it ſhould, by an unaccountable corruption within *itſelf*, be over-run with almoſt a total Apoſtacy; the Power and Authority of *Men*, taking upon themſelves to ſit in the Seat of *God*; and compelling all men by Force and Violence, to ſubmit to Doctrines of their own Invention; and turning Chriſt's Religion of Peace and Love, of Meekneſs and Charity, into a worldly Religion of Dominion and Power, of Contentiouſneſs, Hatred and Oppreſſion. All which predictions having been already exactly and particularly fulfilled, in the plaineſt and

Acts ix. 3. 1 Cor. ix. 1. Gal. i. 15.

and moſt remarkable manner; give abundant reaſon to expect, that what ſtill remains, ſhall likewiſe in its time be no leſs punctually accompliſhed; That when the juſt pleaſure of God has been performed, and the Chriſtian World ſhall for its great Corruptions have been juſtly puniſhed by thoſe Corruptions themſelves; at length the Kingdoms of the Earth, ſhall become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt; and men leaving off to contend about their own vain Notions and unreaſonable Pretences of Power and Dominion, ſhall agree in the original Simplicity of that pure and undefiled Religion, the Sum of which, our Lord himſelf tells us, conſiſts in *loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and our Neighbours as ourſelves.* SERM. LXXXI.

The Truth of our Lord's Reſurrection being thus *atteſted* by ſuch a Multitude of *Witneſſes*, and *confirmed* by ſuch a Number of conſequent *Facts*, that it is hardly poſſible the firſt Preachers of his Doctrine ſhould either Themſelves have been deceived, or be Deceivers of Others; we may now eaſily Anſwer that obvious Objection, ſuggeſted *Acts* x. 40: *why* Chriſt after his Reſurrection *ſhowed himſelf openly, not to* all *the people, but unto* Witneſſes *only, choſen before of God.* And the Reaſon hereof is the ſame, as why in all other caſes God does not all that he is *able* to do, but all that is *fit and right* for him to do. There is in every *Means* a certain *Fitneſs and Proportion* to the *End* it leads to; wherewith if Men will not be ſatisfied, there are no limits to unreaſonable expectations, and no bounds where groundleſs imaginations may ſtop. The Wiſdom of God provided as many unqueſtionable Witneſſes of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, as the Nature of the Thing required; as was ſufficient, to make the Fact unconteſtable; as was ſatisfactory, to any reaſonable and unprejudiced perſon. To work *more* miracles for the ſake of obſtinate and vicious Unbelievers, God was not obliged. And, if he *had* done it, the Objection would ſtill have increaſed without End. For if it was not ſufficient, that Chriſt ſhowed himſelf openly to a *Number of Witneſſes*; but it had been neceſſary that he ſhould appear perſonally to the *whole* City of *Jeruſalem*; for the ſame Reaſon it might be fanſied neceſſary, that he ſhould have ſhown himſelf alſo to the whole *Jewiſh* Nation: and for the ſame Reaſon to all other *Nations* likewiſe; and to Theſe, in *Every* Age *of the World*, as well as in One *Age*; and that, to *every ſingle* Perſon, if one miraculous appearance was not ſufficient, he might have ſhown himſelf *oftner* and with *more* miraculous circumſtances; and ſo on, without End. Which ſhows plainly the Unreaſonableneſs of all *Such* Expectations; when men are not ſatisfied with that Evidence which is fit and ſufficient in its kind.

I ſhall conclude This Head, concerning the *Evidence of the Fact* of Chriſt's being riſen from the Dead, with only One Obſervation about the *Manner* of his Riſing. Which is, that in more than thirty paſſages of the New Teſtament, it is expreſly affirmed that *God* raiſed up our Lord from the Dead, or that he was raiſed by the Power of the *Father*; and yet in two or three other places it is no leſs plainly aſſerted, that *Chriſt* raiſed up *himſelf*. Which different expreſſions might have ſeemed very difficult to be reconciled, but that our Saviour himſelf has in a moſt remarkable paſſage upon this Subject, (as it were *on purpoſe*,) explained them to us with the greateſt accuracy and exact diſtinctneſs: *Joh.* x. 18; *No man*, ſaith he, *taketh my Life from me, but I lay it down of myſelf; I have Power to lay it down, and I have Power to take it again; This Commandment*, (that is, This Commiſſion, This Power,) *have I received of my Father.* I proceed Now in the

II*d* place, To conſider what were the *Effects* of Chriſt's Reſurrection, with reſpect to our *Lord himſelf*. And they were, 1*ſt*, that thereby he was effectually, and in a moſt convincing manner, declared to be *the Son of God*; *Declared to be the Son of God* with Power, ſaith St. *Paul, by the Reſurrection from the Dead*; Rom. i. 4. Inſomuch that even thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, are by the ſame Apoſtle, in his Sermon to the people of *Antioch*, applied to this very purpoſe; *Acts* xiii. 32; *The Promiſe which was made unto the Fathers, God has fulfilled* (ſays he) *unto Us their children, in that he has* raiſed up *Jeſus again; as it is alſo written in the ſecond Pſalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Not that Chriſt Then *began* to be the *Son of God*, but that he was Then *declared* to be ſo, by a moſt powerful and effectual Proof; having *looſed the pains of Death*, and ſhown that *it was not poſſible that he ſhould be holden of it.* 2*dly*;

Another

SERM. LXXXI.

Another *Effect* of Chriſt's Reſurrection, with regard to our *Lord himſelf*, was his being thereby declared the *Judge of Quick and Dead*: Acts x. 40, 42; *Him God raiſed up the third day,—and commanded us—to teſtify, that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead.* And ch. xvii. 31; *God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man whom he hath appointed, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he has raiſed him from the Dead.*

If it be here asked, the appointing a day of general Judgment, being a Truth of ſo great importance to Mankind; why then was it not declared *Sooner* and *Univerſally*, in all *Ages*, and to all *People?* The true Anſwer (I think) is, that in the Whole, the *Rule of Righteouſneſs* and the *great Expectation of a Judgment to come*, is in all Times and in all Places the ſame; And yet the ſeveral *Diſpenſations*, or *particular Methods and Degrees of* God's manifeſting theſe Truths to Mankind, by the Light of *Nature* and *Reaſon*, by Revelations to the *Jews and Patriarchs*, and by the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, are and may as juſtly be very different, as, in other Caſes, it is lawful for God, the Author of All, to make people of different Capacities and in different Circumſtances. And accordingly, what God, when he comes to judgment will *finally require* of Men under theſe different circumſtances, will be proportionally different. For the Judge of the whole Earth, will do what is right, and with *Equity* ſhall he judge the Nations. *The Goſpel* was preached before, ſays the Apoſtle, even in the days of *Abraham*, *Gal.* iii. 8. And even *the Gentiles, which have not the Law* revealed, *are yet a Law unto* themſelves, *ſhowing the work of the Law* written in their hearts, *Rom.* ii. 14. So that, upon the whole, *God is no reſpecter of perſons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him*: For, *not the* Hearers *of the Law are juſt before God, but the* Doers *of the Law ſhall be juſtified*: ver. 13. And on the contrary, *as many as have ſinned without law, ſhall alſo periſh without law, — in the day when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt*; ver. 16.

Acts x. 34.

It remains that I proceed in the

III*d* and *Laſt* place, To conſider what are the *Effects* of our Lord's Reſurrection, with reſpect to Us. And they are; 1*ſt*, our *Juſtification*. That is to ſay; The Reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, was on God's part a publick and authentick Declaration of his *accepting* the Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt, as an atonement for the Sins of all that truly repent. This is the Meaning of thoſe Paſſages of St. *Paul*, where he tells us, that *Chriſt was delivered for our Offences, and raiſed again for our Juſtification*; Rom. iv. 25. That *We*, that is, *wicked men*, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, having been *dead in Sin*, that is, having been in a State of condemnation; *God*, who *raiſed* Chriſt *from the dead, hath quickened* Us *together with Him*, (has reſtored us to the hope of eternal life,) *having forgiven us all Treſpaſſes*; Col. ii. 13. And that, *if Chriſt be not raiſed, we are yet in our Sins*: 1 Cor. xv. 17; that is, if Chriſt be not riſen, we have *Then* no evidence of *God's* having accepted Chriſt's Mediation for us; nor conſequently of *our* being juſtified, or having our Repentance accepted; to ſuch *degrees* and *purpoſes* at leaſt, as God has now declared that it ſhall be accepted through Faith in Him.

2*dly*, The *ſecond* Effect of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, with regard to *Us*; is our *Sanctification* or *Regeneration*: That is, our riſing from the death of Sin, unto a Life of Righteouſneſs; *Rom.* vi. 4: *We are buried with him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as* Chriſt *was raiſed up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even ſo* we *alſo ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life; That having been planted together in the likeneſs of his Death, we ſhould be alſo in the likeneſs of his Reſurrection.* The Meaning of the Apoſtle is; that the Death and Reſurrection of Chriſt, into which we are Baptized, and whereof Baptiſm is an Emblem, ought to be a perpetual obligation upon us, to riſe from the Death of Sin unto the Spiritual Life of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs; *Col.* ii. 12, and iii. 1; *Buried with him in Baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are* riſen *with him.—If ye then* (ſaith he) *be* riſen *with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things which are above; For ye are dead*, that is, *dead to* Sin, (as the ſame Apoſtle explains it; *Rom.* vi. 2:) *and your Life is hid with Chriſt in God.* And what he means by That Phraſe, *hid with Chriſt in God*, is explained in the next verſe, ch. iii. 3. *When* Chriſt, *who is our Life, ſhall appear, then ſhall* ye *alſo appear with him in glory.*

For

SERM. LXXXI.

For 3*dly*, The *Third* and *Laſt* Effect of the Reſurrection of *Chriſt*, with reſpect to *Us*, is the Aſſurance of *Our* Reſurrection likewiſe, unto *Glorification*; 1 *Cor.* xv. 20; *Now is Chriſt riſen from the Dead, and become the* firſt-Fruits *of them that ſlept.* And therefore This is conſtantly uſed by the Apoſtles, as a perpetual Argument of Conſolation to good Chriſtians; 1 *Pet.* i. 3: *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again into a lively hope,* by *the reſurrection of* (*Jeſus*) *Chriſt from the Dead:* Rom. viii. 11; *If the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the Dead, dwell in you; he that raiſed up Chriſt from the Dead, ſhall alſo quicken* your *mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* And 1 *Th.* iv. 14; *If we believe that Jeſus died and roſe again, even ſo Them alſo which ſleep in Jeſus will God bring with him.*

Bleſſed and Happy are They, *who ſhall be thought worthy to obtain* That *Life, and the Reſurrection from the Dead*; For from thenceforth *they ſhall be before the Throne of God, and ſhall ſerve him day and night in his Temple; And God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there ſhall be no more Death, neither ſorrow nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more pain: For the former things are paſſed away.*

SERMON LXXXII.

Of CHRIST's Deſcent into Hell.

[*Preached on Eaſter-Day.*]

PSALM. xvi. 9, 10.

Wherefore my Heart was glad, and my glory rejoiced; my Fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in Hope. For why? Thou ſhalt not leave my Soul in Hell; neither ſhalt thou ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee corruption.

SERM. LXXXII.

THE Afflictions and Calamities which fall upon Many men in this preſent State, are of ſuch a nature, that, were it not for the Hopes which True Religion and the Knowledge of God affords, their only Comfort would be That expectation of *Death*, which *Job* thus elegantly expreſſes, ch. iii. 17; *There the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and there the Weary be at Reſt: There the Priſoners reſt together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor: The Small and Great are There, and the Servant is free from his Maſter.* But *True Religion* affords virtuous and good Men a very *different* Proſpect; and teaches them to expect, that, if God *does not* think fit to deliver them out of their Troubles *Here*, (which yet he ſome-

ſometimes *does* in a very extraordinary and unexpected Manner;) yet even the *Grave itſelf* puts not an end to his Power of Redeeming them; but he *can* and *will* raiſe them up again, to a *future* and a *better* Life. So that they may look upon *Death itſelf*, not barely as a *putting an end* to their preſent Afflictions, but as a *Paſſage* to a *Glorious and Immortal* State. *Wherefore my Fleſh alſo*, ſays the holy Pſalmiſt, *ſhall reſt in Hope: For why? Thou ſhalt not leave my Soul in Hell; neither ſhalt thou ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee corruption.* SERM. LXXXII.

The *Pſalm*, of which theſe words are a part, ſeems to have been written by *David* in the time of ſome particular *perſonal Calamity*. Ver. 1; *Preſerve me, O God; for in thee have I put my Truſt.* The *Ground* of This his Truſt, he expreſſes to be his *Adherence to the True Religion*, in oppoſition to the *Idolatry* of the *Nations* about him: Ver. 4, 6; *They that run after another God, ſhall have great Trouble;* ——— but *The Lord himſelf is the Portion of Mine inheritance, and of my Cup.* The *particular* affliction, which he here refers to, *whatſoever* it was; he acknowledges, proved *beneficial* to him, in *fixing* his Mind *more ſteddily* upon things relating to his *ſpiritual eſtate*: Ver. 8; *I will thank the Lord for giving me warning; my Reins alſo chaſten me in the night-ſeaſon: I have ſet God always before me; for he is on my right hand, therefore I ſhall not fall.* And then he adds, in the words of the *Text*, the *Comfort* ariſing to him from the *ſenſe* of this Improvement: *Wherefore my Heart was glad, and my Glory rejoiced; my Fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in Hope: For why? Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell; neither ſhalt thou ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee corruption.*

'Tis remarkable here, that the *former* part of theſe words; *My Heart was glad, and my* Glory *rejoiced*; are cited, Acts ii. 26; according to the Rendring of the LXX, *My Heart rejoiced, and my* Tongue *was glad.* Which not only, in *other words*, expreſſes the very *ſame ſenſe*; but ſhows us alſo *what* it is, that the *Pſalmiſt*, in *Other* Paſſages, means by his *Glory*. Pſal. xxx. 12; *To the end that my* Glory, (that is, that my Tongue,) *may ſing Praiſe to thee, and not be ſilent.* And Pſal. lvii. 9; *Awake up, my* Glory; *awake, Lute and Harp; I my ſelf will awake right early*: That is; Both with my *Voice*, and with Inſtruments of Muſick, will I ſing Praiſe unto thee.

The *latter* part of the words; *My Fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in Hope: For why? thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither ſhalt thou ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee corruption:* are by Many underſtood to be a *highly figurative* expreſſion in the Pſalmiſt, of his earneſt expectation of a *literal* and *temporal* Deliverance from the Affliction he was at preſent under. In like manner as St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of his own Eſcape from a very dangerous Perſecution, calls it a deliverance from a *great Death*; 2 Cor. i. 9; *We ſhould not truſt*, ſays he, *in ourſelves, but in God which raiſeth the Dead: Who delivered us from ſo great* a Death, *and doth deliver: In whom we truſt that he will yet deliver us.* And ſo likewiſe Thoſe remarkable Words of *Job*; ch. xix. 25; *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the Earth; And though, after my Skin, Worms deſtroy this Body, yet in my Fleſh ſhall I ſee God; Whom I ſhall ſee for my ſelf, and mine Eyes ſhall behold, and not Another, though my reins be conſumed within me*: Even *Theſe* words, I ſay, are by ſome Interpreters underſtood as a Prediction, in *highly figurative* and *prophetical* expreſſions, of his Reſtoration to his *Temporal* Greatneſs and Proſperity. But as This is a very *forced* Senſe of the words, and, if it were their *True* Meaning, would ſtill be at leaſt the *borrowing of a Figure* from the Notion and Expectation of a *Reſurrection from the Dead*; it is more *reaſonable and natural* to underſtand them in that *obvious* and *literal* ſenſe, wherein they are clearly and plainly the Expreſſion of a *better* and *more certain Hope*. And, for the ſame reaſon, the words of *my Text* likewiſe, if they are *at all* to be applied to the *Pſalmiſt himſelf*; may with a better emphaſis, and as a more aſſured Ground of Hope, be underſtood to ſignify his expectation of a *Future State*, than of a *Temporal* Deliverance. But indeed, in their *real* and *moſt proper* Senſe, they are not applicable to the *Pſalmiſt himſelf*, but to *Him* of whom *David* was both a *Prophet* and a *Type*; The *ſame Spirit* of God, which through the *whole Period* of the old Teſtament from the Beginning of the World pointed perpetually to *Chriſt* through an innumerable variety of Types and Prophecies, *here likewiſe* directing the inſpired Penman to ſuch Expreſſions, as might be a *ſtrict* and *literal* deſcription of the *Reſurrection* of *Chriſt*, but could not with the ſame propriety

SERM. LXXXII.

propriety be applied to *David*. Thus the Apoſtle obſerves, Acts xiii. 36; *David, after he had ſerved his own generation by the Will of God, fell on Sleep, and was laid unto his Fathers, and ſaw corruption; But he whom God raiſed again, ſaw no corruption.* And chap. ii. 29; *The Patriarch David is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto This day: Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had ſworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Fleſh, he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit on his Throne; He, ſeeing this before, ſpake of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither his Fleſh did ſee Corruption.* And it is remarkable, by the way; that, as the fore-cited words of *Job*, which are much more emphatically deſcriptive of the *Reſurrection of the Dead*, than of his *Reſtoration to his Temporal Proſperity*; are, in order to excite our more particular Attention, introduced with That extraordinary and moſt ſolemn exclamation, *Oh that my words were now written, that they were printed in a Book! that they were graven with an iron pen, and lead, in the rock for ever!* ſo *This Pſalm*, which contains in it ſo *important* a Prophecy of Chriſt, is diſtinguiſhed by a * *Title* prefixed at the Head of it, which *in the Original* ſignifies a *Memorial engraved* on Stone or Marble for perpetuity of Ages.

* *Michtam.*

But to proceed,

Concerning that *particularly remarkable* Phraſe, *Thou ſhalt not leave my Soul in* Hell; 'tis to be obſerved, that though in our preſent language, the word *Hell*, in common Speech, does *Now* always ſignify *The State of the Damned*; yet in This Text, it is evident, it cannot be underſtood in That ſignification. For, that *David* was not condemned to That Place of Torment, is agreed on All hands: And that *Chriſt*, of whom *David* was a *Type and Prophet*, did not, by *deſcending into Hell*, enter into the Place appointed for the Final Puniſhment of the wicked, is very evident both from *Scripture* and *Reaſon*.

In the *Scriptures* of the *Old Teſtament*, the word which we render *Hell*, frequently ſignifies only *The State of the Dead* in general. Thus *Pſ.* lxxxix. 47; according to the Tranſlation in our *Common Prayer*; *What man is he that liveth, and ſhall not ſee Death; and ſhall he deliver his Soul from the hand of* Hell? is, in our Tranſlation in the *Bible*, *ſhall he deliver his Soul from the hand of the* Grave? And what *Solomon* affirms *Prov.* xxvii. 20; that Hell *and Deſtruction are never full*, is plainly the very ſame in ſenſe, with what in *ch.* xxx. 15; is *Thus* expreſſed; *There are three things that are never ſatisfied, yea four things ſay not, it is enough: The* Grave, and ſo on.

In the *New Teſtament*; the word, *Hell*, ſometimes ſignifies the *Place appointed for the Final Puniſhment of the Wicked*, and at other times it denotes only *The State of the Dead* in general. But This ambiguity, is in *our own* language only, and not in the *Original*: For whenever the *Place of Torment* is ſpoken of, the word *Hell*, in the *Original*, is always *Gehennah*: But when *only the State of the Dead in general* is intended, 'tis always expreſſed by a quite *different Name*, which though *We* render by the *ſame* word *Hell*, yet its ſignification is *at large* The *Inviſible State*. Thus when St. *James* ſays, that *the Tongue*, meaning a *wicked and profane* Tongue, is *a world of iniquity,----and ſetteth on Fire the courſe of Nature, and is ſet on Fire of* Hell: And when our Saviour ſays to the Phariſees, *Ye ſerpents, ye generation of Vipers, how can ye eſcape the Damnation of* Hell? and tells them, that when they have gained a *Proſelyte*, they *make him twofold more the child of Hell than themſelves*: And when he admoniſhes his Diſciples to *fear him, who*, after he has killed, *is able to deſtroy both Soul and Body in* Hell; and warns them, that *whoſoever ſhall ſay unto his Brother, Thou Fool, ſhall be in danger of* Hell-Fire; and adviſes them, *If thy right Eye offend thee*, (that is, if the Deſire of any thing as dear to thee as thy Eyes, be in danger to draw thee into Sin,) *pluck it out and caſt it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members ſhould periſh, and not that thy whole Body ſhould be caſt into* Hell: In all *Theſe* Paſſages, I ſay, the word *Hell* is, in the Original, *Gehennah*; which always ſignifies *The State of the Damned*. But in *Other* Places, where *we*, in *our* Rendring, ſtill make uſe of the *ſame* word, *Hell*; the Original has a *very different* word, which ſignifies only *The Inviſible State*, or the *State of the Dead* in general. Thus *Matt.* xi. 23; *Thou Capernaum which art exalted unto Heaven, ſhalt be brought down to* Hell: The Meaning is; That Great and Proud City ſhould be

Jam. iii. 6.

Mat. xxiii. 33.

ver. 15.

ch. x. 28.

Mat. v. 22. and *ver.* 29.

Idem.

levelled

levelled with the Duſt, and diſappear utterly as Thoſe who have been long buried in the Grave. Again: When the Rich man *in* Hell, *lift up his eyes, being in Torments*, Luke xvi. 23; the word in the Original denotes *at large* That *Inviſible State* of the Dead in general, wherein were both *Abraham* and *Lazarus in his Boſom*, (and the *Paradiſe* wherein the *Penitent Thief* was to be *with* our *Saviour*,) as well as the *Souls of the Wicked* in their *Torments*. Again: When our Lord promiſes; *Matt.* xvi. 18; that *the Gates of* Hell *ſhould not prevail againſt* his Church, the * words, (*Gates of Hell*,) properly and ſtrictly rendred, ſignify *The* Paſſage; *to the Inviſible State*, that is, *Death*: And the Senſe of his Promiſe is, that even *Death itſelf*, (which is the utmoſt Extent of all Perſecution from *thoſe who kill the Body, and, after That have no more that they can do*) ſhould never be able to ſuppreſs his Doctrine, and extinguiſh his Religion in the World. Laſtly; When 'tis declared in the Prophecy concerning the End of the World; *Rev.* xx. 13 *and* 14; that *Death and* Hell *delivered up the Dead which were in Them*; and that, after the Judgment, *Death and* Hell *were caſt into the Lake of Fire*; 'tis very evident, that *Hell* in Theſe Paſſages cannot poſſibly ſignify *The State of the Damned*; but That *State of departed Souls in general*, from whence All ſhall be ſummoned at the Great Day of Accounts; and which *State of Death*, or *Death itſelf*, after the final Judgment, ſhall *be no more*. And thus therefore likewiſe in the words of *my Text*, as they are cited out of the *Pſalm* by the Apoſtle St. *Peter*, *Acts* ii. 27; *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in* Hell; the True and complete ſenſe is plainly This; *Thou wilt not relinquiſh me, thou wilt not ſuffer me to continue in the State of the Dead; but wilt certainly raiſe me up again at thy appointed time*.

* πύλαι ἅδου.

From This explication of *all* the *Texts* relating to This matter, 'tis very clear that the *Scriptures* no where teach, that our Lord, by *deſcending into Hell*, ever entred into the Place appointed for the Final Puniſhment of the Wicked. Nor is there any thing in *Reaſon*, from whence it can by any juſt *Conſequence* be *inferred*, that it was at all requiſite for him ſo to do.

It has been conceived by *Some*, that it was needful for our Lord to go down into the place of Torment, in order to render his *Satisfaction* complete, by undergoing himſelf the very ſame Sufferings, which were due to Thoſe for whom he made Satisfaction. But this notion is founded entirely upon a Miſtake. For the Satisfaction of Chriſt, does not depend upon the *Sameneſs of the Sufferings*, but upon the *good pleaſure of God* who ruleth over all; who has been pleaſed to declare himſelf appeaſed by the voluntary condeſcenſion and Sufferings of our Lord, as a ſufficient Vindication of his Supreme Authority; ſo that he can, upon the Merit of That Sacrifice, conſiſtently with the Honour and Dignity of his Laws, accept the *Repentance* and *Amendment* of returning Sinners, and *Freely* forgive them their paſt Sins. But, beſides This, Neither was it indeed *poſſible* in the Nature of Things, that our Lord ſhould *at all* undergo the Torments of the Wicked. For the Sting of *their* Puniſhment is the *Worm that never dieth*, and an endleſs *Deſpair of the Favour of God*; Which are things altogether impoſſible to have fallen upon *Him*.

Others therefore have fancied, that our Lord deſcended into *Hell*, not indeed to *ſuffer* any thing there *himſelf*, but to *deliver Others* out of That Place of Torment. But *This* alſo is plainly an erroneous opinion. For ſince the Scripture every where teaches, that *as the Tree falleth, ſo it ſhall lie*; and that, for thoſe who die impenitent and unreformed, there is no Redemption; 'tis certain the *Wicked*, when once condemned, are no more capable of being delivered at all. And as to *Virtuous* and *Good* men; it is no leſs certain that *the Souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there ſhall no torment touch them*. They are in Scripture repreſented as being in *Paradiſe*; or in *Abraham*'s *Boſom*; but never as being in the *place of Torment* at all.

Laſtly, therefore, it has been ſuppoſed by *Others*, that Chriſt deſcended into the place appointed for the final Puniſhment of the Wicked, to *triumph* There over *Satan* in his *own Kingdom*. But neither is This Opinion, in any wiſe, agreeable to Scripture. For the Devil and his Angels are not *yet* confined to the Pit of Deſtruction, before the day of Judgment. And if they were, yet *That* is *not* their *Kingdom*, but their Place of *Puniſhment*. The *Kingdom* of the *Devil*, is the Prevalency and Dominion of *Sin* in *this* World: And here Chriſt *triumphs* over him,

SERM. LXXXII.

by converting men from their Sins and Debaucheries, from their Unrighteouſneſs and Iniquities, which are the *Works of the Devil*; to the Practice of Virtue, Juſtice, Goodneſs, Temperance, Charity and Truth, which are the eſtabliſhment of the *Kingdom of God* upon Earth.

Upon the *Whole* therefore, there is no ſufficient Foundation, either in the *Reaſon* of the *Thing*, or in the *Declarations* of *Scripture*, to ſuppoſe that our Lord ever deſcended at all into the *Place of Torment*, into the place appointed for the final Puniſhment of the Wicked. But the Full Meaning, both of thoſe Words in my *Text*, *Thou ſhalt not leave my Soul in Hell*; and of all the *Other* Paſſages of Scripture, relating to That matter; is, that our Lord continued in the *State of the Dead*, in the *Inviſible State of departed Souls*, during the Time appointed; but that, it not being *poſſible for him to be holden of Death* he was raiſed again *without ſeeing corruption*.

The *natural Inference* from which Doctrine, both of our *Lord*'s overcoming Death, and of *good mens* being aſſured conſequently that *They* ſhall overcome it alſo; is *That Hope* and *Comfort* to virtuous and religious Minds under all *Temporal afflictions* whatſoever, of which the Pſalmiſt expreſſes his Senſe in the words whereof my Text are a part. *I have ſet the Lord always before me; becauſe he is at my right hand, I ſhall not be moved. Therefore my Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth; my Fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in Hope. For thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thine Holy One to ſee corruption. Thou wilt ſhow me the path of Life; In thy preſence is Fulneſs of Joy, at thy right hand are Pleaſures for evermore.*

The *Reſurrection of Chriſt*, is the Great *Evidence* of the Truth of his *Doctrine*. And a *Principal Part* of his *Doctrine*, is, the *bringing Life and Immortality to Light*; or, the giving us an Aſſurance, that, as *Chriſt* is *riſen* from the Dead, ſo *We* alſo, if we imitate him in the Obedience of his Life, ſhall, after Death, riſe with him unto Glory. The Condition and Circumſtances of this preſent tranſitory Life are ſuch, that, without the expectation of a future and a better State, the Satisfactions of *Life* are very uncertain and precarious, and in *Death* there is no foundation of Hope. They who enjoy the *Greateſt Affluence* of the Good things of this preſent time, yet have them mixed with ſo many Interruptions, with ſo many Fears, with ſo many Anxieties and Vexations of Life, if in *Theſe things alone* their Proſpect of Happineſs is terminated; that, upon the Whole, it can hardly be ſaid, that their *Pleaſures compenſate* for their *Uneaſineſſes*: But with regard to *far the greateſt part* of Mankind; what St. *Paul* affirms concerning *Chriſtians in particular*, that, *if in This life only* they *have Hope*, they *are of all* Men *the moſt miſerable*; may, with equal Truth be aſſerted *generally* concerning *Men*; if *in This life only* they *have Hope*, they are of All *Creatures* the moſt miſerable. The *wiſeſt* and *beſt* men therefore, even in the *Heathen* World, have, in All Ages and in All Nations, from the conſideration of the *Natural reaſon* of *Things*, from their *Idea* of the *Attributes* and *Perfections* of *God*, and from the *unequal Diſtribution* of things in the *preſent* Life; juſtly and ſtrongly argued themſelves into a Belief and Expectation of a *Future* and a *Better* State. They argued, that nothing can be imagined more vain and empty, nothing more void of all Marks of Wiſdom, than the Fabrick of the World and the Creation of Mankind; if all This was done without any further Deſign, than only for the maintaining a perpetual Succeſſion of ſuch ſhortlived Generations of Mortals, as we at preſent are; to live in the utmoſt Confuſion and Diſorder for a very few Years, and then Periſh eternally into Nothing. They argued, that, ſince This *could not rationally* be the caſe, there *muſt* conſequently be a *Future State*. And if ſo; then the Calamities and Afflictions, which in This World often fall upon the Beſt of men, cannot but be intended ſome way for their Benefit, if not *Here*, yet certainly *Hereafter*.

The *Patriarchs* of old, who, beſides *this general Light of Nature*, had moreover ſome *particular* Manifeſtations of God, carried this matter ſtill further: And though Life and Immortality was not *compleatly* revealed to them, yet from the *Manner* of God's dealing with them they aſſuredly gathered, that his Promiſes did not terminate in This Mortal Life. Accordingly, they *ſo* behaved themſelves in this *preſent World*, as ſhowed plainly that they ſought a *better country, that is, an heavenly*; *Looking for a City which hath foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.*

God. They *endured* by Faith, *as ſeeing Him who is Inviſible;* and often *were tortured,* SERM.
not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection. Saying with the LXXXII.
Pſalmiſt in the Text, even in *Death* itſelf; *My Heart was glad, and my Glory rejoiced; my Fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in Hope; For thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, nor ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee corruption.*

And if *This* was the Behaviour of Thoſe who ſaw the Promiſes *only afar off,* and had them revealed to them *only in Types and Figures;* What manner of Perſons ought *We* to be, to whom *Life and Immortality are* now clearly and diſtinctly *brought to Light* by the Goſpel! And if we live *worthy* of the *Vocation wherewith* we are called; how gladly may we ſay with St. *Paul,* under *Any Troubles* of life whatſoever; that *our light affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory: While we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen, are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen, are eternal.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXXIII.

Of CHRIST's ſitting on the Right Hand of GOD.

[*Preached on Aſcenſion-Day.*]

HEB. viii. 1.

Now of the things which we have ſpoken, This is the Sum: We have ſuch an High-Prieſt, who is ſet on the right hand of the Throne of the Majeſty in the Heavens.

SERM. LXXXIII.

IN the foregoing chapter, the Apoſtle ſets forth at large the Excellency, of our Saviour's *perpetual and unchangeable* Prieſthood; by comparing it with That *mutable* and *ſucceſſive* one among the *Jews:* Ver. 23; *They truly were many Prieſts, becauſe they were not ſuffered to continue by reaſon of Death: But this man, becauſe he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Prieſthood. Wherefore he is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them. For ſuch an High Prieſt became us, who is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens. Who needeth not daily,*

SERM. LXXXIII.

daily, as thoſe High Prieſts, to offer up Sacrifice, firſt for his own Sins, and then for the peoples, but has, by *One* Offering of himſelf, *for ever* perfected them that are ſanctified. The *full explication* of This Doctrine, and of the Conſequences of it, is the Subject of this *Whole Epiſtle:* And a *brief Summary* of it, is given us in the words of the *Text*; *Now of the things which we have ſpoken, This is the Sum: We have Such an High Prieſt, who is ſet on the right hand of the Throne of the Majeſty in the Heavens.*

Our Lord, *after* his Reſurrection, as we find it recorded in the *Goſpels* and in the Hiſtory of the *Acts*, *ſhewed himſelf alive to his Diſciples by many infallible Proofs, being ſeen of them forty days, and ſpeaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*; converſing with them familiarly, opening their Underſtandings, expounding to them the Scriptures, explaining to them in all the Prophets the things concerning Himſelf, directing them in what manner they ſhould preach the Goſpel to all Nations, and promiſing to be with them by the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit even unto the End of the World. By which means when they were fully inſtructed for the execution of their Office, he departed from them, aſcending viſibly into Heaven, in ſuch a manner as is deſcribed by St. *Paul* under the prophetick words of the Pſalmiſt, *When he aſcended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men: Now----He that deſcended, is the ſame alſo that aſcended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.* From thenceforth therefore, *we have* (as the Text expreſſes it) *ſuch an High Prieſt, who is ſet on the right hand of the Throne of the Majeſty in the Heavens.*

The word, Heaven, when applied to the *Omnipreſent God*; as in that expreſſion of *Solomon, God is in* Heaven, *and thou upon Earth, therefore let thy words be few*; and in that compellation wherewith our Lord begins his prayer, *Our Father which art in* Heaven; The word, *Heaven*, I ſay, when thus applied to *God*, does not ſignify *literally* a particular *place*, in point of *Situation*; but *figuratively*, a *State* of *Higheſt Dignity* and *Supreme Dominion.* For God, being *eſſentially* preſent *every-where*, cannot be *really and literally* in *One place* more than in *Another.* But he can make *particular manifeſtations* of his *Glory*, when and where and how he pleaſes: And where he does This in the moſt *conſpicuous* manner, *That place* is called, by way of Eminence, his *Habitation*, his *Throne*, his *Preſence.* Now becauſe the *Heavens*, are *higher* than the Earth; becauſe *Thence* are derived all beneficial Influences upon this lower World; becauſe *There* is the Habitation of Angels, attending upon the Commands of God; *therefore* God, who is *really and eſſentially* Preſent *every-where* alike, yet, with regard to the *Exerciſe of his Power*, and the *manifeſtation of his Glory*, is to *Us* repreſented as being particularly in *Heaven.* And *Thither* therefore did our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* accordingly aſcend to the Higheſt place of Glory and Dignity, to the moſt immediate Preſence of the Majeſty of God, to *His* Father, and *Our* Father, to *His* God and *Our* God; and is *ſet down* (as the Text with great elegance expreſſes it) *on the right hand of the Throne of the Majeſty in the Heavens.*

This phraſe, The *Majeſty*, uſed thus abſolutely and indefinitely, without mentioning the perſon to whom it belongs; is, in a very ſublime and emphatical manner, expreſſive of the *Supereminent* Glory and Majeſty of *God.* It ſets forth to us in *ſuch* a ſenſe, the *ſingular* and *tranſcendent* Glory of the Divine Majeſty; as that, *comparatively* ſpeaking, there is *No other* Majeſty but *His.* Thus, in *Other* places of Scripture, when God is ſtiled abſolutely and by way of Eminence, *The* Holy *One*; *The* Bleſſed, (as *Mar.* xiv. 61; *Art thou the Chriſt, the Son of* the Bleſſed?) *The* Power, (as in the verſe next following, *Ye ſhall ſee the Son of man ſitting on the right hand of* Power;) *The Excellent* Glory, as 2 *Pet.* i. 17; *There came ſuch a voice to him from The* Excellent Glory;) The ſenſe of theſe expreſſions is, that, *comparatively* ſpeaking, there is None *Holy*, None *Bleſſed*, None *Powerful*, None *Glorious*, but *He* Alone. Good *Men*, are in Scripture frequently ſtiled *Holy*; and *Angels*, are the Holy *Angels of God*; and yet *of* him and *to* him *alone* it is ſaid, *Thou* Only *art Holy. Angels* and the *Souls of Men* are *Immortal*; and yet of *Him* it is in a moſt juſt ſenſe affirmed, that *He only hath Immortality. Others* have Wiſdom aſcribed to them in their Degree and Order, and yet *He* nevertheleſs is *God* Only *Wiſe. Others* are, in their rank and proportion, truly and juſtly called Good; and yet

SERM. LXXXIII. Our Lord, with peculiar Emphaſis and High Propriety, declares, *There is None* Good, *but One, that is, God.* The Scripture, without Any Scruple, calls *Temporal* Deliverers, *Saviours*; Nehem. ix. 27. And our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, in the *ſpiritual* and infinitely *higher* ſenſe, is, by way of Eminence, ſtiled *Our Saviour*: And yet the *Father Almighty*, (who in St. *Paul*'s language, *Tit.* iii. 4, 5, is God *our Saviour* which *ſaves us through Jeſus* Chriſt *our Saviour*,) declares concerning Himſelf, *Iſai.* xliii. 11; *Beſides Me, there is no Saviour.* The manner of ſpeaking, is very *juſt*, as well as lofty and ſublime; and it is uſeful and proper, in order to keep up in mens minds a due and awful ſenſe of the Supreme and unapproachable Greatneſs of God. *Others* have *Power* aſcribed to them, and *Dominion* and *Majeſty*; There are, as St. *Paul* tells us, *Gods many, and Lords many, in Heaven and in Earth*, 1 Cor. viii. 5. Some *falſely* ſo called; *Others* rightly, in *ſuch* a ſenſe as the Scripture gives the Title of *Gods* and *Lords* to *Angels* and to *Men*: Yet, for all that, *there is ſtill really no other God but One*; and The *Majeſty*, abſolutely ſpeaking, is *His* alone. *Our High Prieſt*, is *ſet on the right hand of the Throne, of* The Majeſty *in the Heavens.*

The term, Right Hand, when applied to God, is not to be underſtood *literally*, as denoting a particular *Situation* with regard to *Place*, (for God has no *Hands*, no *Shape* or *Parts*;) But it ſignifies *figuratively* a *State* of High *Dignity*, *Dominion* and *Power*, next and immediately after God the Father himſelf. Our Saviour's being advanced to the Right Hand of *God*, is his being actually inveſted with That *Glory and Dignity*, for the *Joy* of which, when it was *ſet before him*, he willingly *endured the Croſs*, (Heb. xii. 2:) *deſpiſing the Shame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Throne of God*; That is, has overcome Death, and entered into his *Kingdom of Glory.* And therefore, in *other* places of Scripture, the very ſame Notion is ſet forth under the parallel expreſſions, that *Him hath God exalted* with *his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour*; to be *Lord both of the Dead and Living*; to be the *Head of all Principality and Power*, the *Head over all things to the Church*: That he hath given him *All Power* both *in Heaven and Earth*, and *put all things in ſubjection under his feet*; *Angels, and Authorities, and Powers, being made ſubject unto him*: That he *has appointed him Heir of all things*, and, *according to the working of his mighty Power, has ſet him far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in This World, but alſo in That which is to come*; *That at the Name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth*; *and that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* All which exalted Characters, are emphatically included in this one figurative expreſſion; *the* right hand *of God*, the right hand *of the Throne of the Majeſty in the Heavens.*

Laſtly, The word, ſitting, or *being* ſet, is likewiſe to be underſtood, not *literally*, as denoting a *particular* corporeal *Poſture*; (for in *other* places of Scripture it is expreſſed that our Lord *Is* at the right hand of God, or that he *Stands* at the right hand of God;) But the word, *ſitting*, is *for This reaſon* more frequently uſed in the caſe before us, becauſe it implies, in its *figurative* Uſe and Signification, Fulneſs of *Poſſeſſion*, and perpetuity of retaining the Glory poſſeſſed; *Heb.* x. 12: *After he had offered One Sacrifice for Sins, he* for ever *ſat down on the right hand of God*; *From henceforth expecting, till his Enemies be made his footſtool*; *For by One Offering, he hath perfected* for ever *them that are Sanctified.* From the time of our Lord's aſcending into Heaven, till his Second Coming to Judgment, there were *Many Ages* to paſs over: And thefore St. *Peter* in his Sermon to the *Jews*; Acts iii. 19, tells them, that *when the times of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord, he ſhall ſend Jeſus Chriſt which before was preached unto* them; *whom the* Heavens muſt receive, *until the times of reſtitution of all things.*

The *Office* which our Saviour executes during this his continuance in Heaven, is ſignified to us in the Text under the character of *High Prieſt*: *We have ſuch an* High Prieſt, *who is ſet on the right hand of ----- the Majeſty in the Heavens.* And the explication of the Nature of *This Office*, as applied to our Lord, is the principal ſubject of this whole Epiſtle. Upon which account the words of the Text are *thus* introduced by the Apoſtle: *Of the things which we have ſpoken, This is the Sum:*

Sum: We have ſuch *an* High Prieſt, *who is ſet on the right hand of the Throne of the Majeſty in the Heavens.* As, among the *Jews* the *High Prieſt* in the *Temple* entred *once* a year *into the Holy Place*, with the Blood of *Others*; ſo *Chriſt* having *once in the End of the World put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*, it was neceſſary that He *with his Own blood* ſhould *enter once* likewiſe *into the Holy Place*, into *That within the Veil, having obtained eternal redemption for us:* That is, it was neceſſary that he ſhould aſcend into Heaven, to finiſh and preſent his moſt acceptable oblation before God, for the propitiation of the Sins of the World. For ſo the Apoſtle interprets it: *Chriſt* (ſays he) *is not entred into the Holy Places* made with hands, *which are only the Figures of the True; but into Heaven itſelf, now to appear in the preſence of God for us.* SERM. LXXXIII.

The firſt and immediate Effect of this his Appearing in the Preſence of God for us, was the *Miſſion* of the *Holy Ghoſt*. *Before* our Saviour's Exaltation, the *Holy Ghoſt*, ſays the Evangeliſt, (ſpeaking comparatively,) *was not yet given, becauſe that Jeſus was not yet glorified*; Joh. vii. 39. And our Lord himſelf: *I tell you the Truth*, ſays he; *it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: But if I depart, I will ſend him unto you*; and ---- *he will guide you into all Truth.* Accordingly, at the Pentecoſt after Chriſt's Aſcenſion, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon the Apoſtles in a ſingular and moſt miraculous manner, beyond the Examples of former Inſpirations. And by the continual aſſiſtance and ordinary operations of the ſame Spirit, has our Lord promiſed to *be with us* his true Diſciples, to *be in the midſt of them* where-ever *two or three are gathered together in His Name*, even unto the End of the World.

But further: The Scripture repreſents this our Great *High Prieſt*, as continually *interceeding* for us at the right hand of God, from the time of his Aſcenſion till his final coming to Judgment. *We have an* Advocate *with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our Sins. For* our Sins; that is, for the Sins of all thoſe who *truly repent* and *effectually amend* their Lives, according to the gracious Terms of the Goſpel; and who are therefore accordingly repreſented as having *waſhed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.* For Perſons of *This* diſpoſition, our Saviour is a perpetual and effectual Advocate, to obtain perfect Forgiveneſs of their paſt Sins, and to cleanſe them by the perpetual aſſiſtance of his Spirit, from all unrighteouſneſs. They *have an High Prieſt, not who cannot be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, but who was* himſelf *tempted in all points like as* They are, *yet without Sin.* And he *is* able *alſo*, as well as willing, *to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he* ever *liveth to make interceſſion for them*; Heb. vii. 25. And becauſe he thus lives *for ever*, and has an *unchangeable Prieſthood*, therefore he is ſaid in Scripture to be a Prieſt, not after the Order of *Aaron*, which was a perpetual Succeſſion of Prieſts *not ſuffered to continue by reaſon of death*; but after the Order of *Melchiſedec*, who was both *Prince* and *High Prieſt*, and of whom is recorded neither Predeceſſor nor Succeſſor, that he might be a Type and Emblem of Him who ever *liveth to make Interceſſion for us.*

Some Unbelievers there have been in All Ages, and ſtill are, who, in oppoſition to this Great Doctrine of Chriſtianity, alledge, that God being always Omnipreſent and ready to hear the Prayers which every one offers for himſelf, therefore there was *no need* of appointing a Mediator; and that God always acting, in his own nature, according to the exact Right and Reaſon of the Caſe; therefore he cannot be *changed*, or have Any *Affection moved*, by the interpoſition of Any Interceſſor whatſoever. But in This matter they greatly miſtake. For if God's being himſelf every where preſent, were a ſufficient reaſon why *no Mediator* ſhould be appointed to intercede for *Men*; it would by the ſame argument be alſo a ſufficient reaſon, why men ſhould neither pray nor intercede for *themſelves:* For God *knows* their Wants as perfectly, even without their ever praying for *Themſelves*, as without a *Mediator* interceding for them. If therefore, notwithſtanding God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcience, it be ſtill reaſonable to require that men ſhould pray for *Themſelves*; in order to keep up in their Minds a conſtant ſenſe of God, and that they may make continual Acknowledgment of their Dependence upon him: It may in like manner be very reaſonable, in order to keep up in their Minds

a juſt

SERM. LXXXIII.

a juſt ſenſe of their own *Unworthineſs* and of the true *Demerit of Sin*, to require of them, that through ſuch a *Mediator* only, as he has thought fit to appoint, ſhould they have Acceſs to *Him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*. And tho' it be indeed very true, that by No interceſſion whatſoever, can God ever be moved to act otherwiſe than is agreeable to perfect Right and Reaſon; yet in caſes of *Mercy and Compaſſion*, where the *whole* of what he does, proceeds from mere *Free Bounty*; 'tis evident he may convey thoſe his *Free Gifts*, in what *Manner*, and upon what *Terms or Conditions*, and through what *Inſtruments* he pleaſes; and may require their being accepted in *that* particular *Method*, or not at all. For however *otherwiſe* it be in all ſuch caſes, where there is any Claim of *Juſtice*, or Demand of *Right*; yet undoubtedly, in Diſpenſations of *mere* Mercy, that which is true of every *Owner*, even among frail and mortal *Men*, may with much greater propriety be ſaid of *God*; ſhall he not do *what* and *how* he will, with *his own?*

That which remains, is, to draw two or three *practical Inferences* from the whole of what has been ſaid.

And *1ſt*, From the doctrine of our Lord's ſitting at the Right Hand of God to intercede continually for us, and to govern his Church by the miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter, the Apoſtle's inference is very natural. Heb. iv. 16; *Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need:* Again, ch. x. 19; *Having boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood of Jeſus, (i.e.* having acceſs to God through Him,) *by a new and living way which he has conſecrated for us; and having an High Prieſt over the houſe of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of faith.* For *He that ſpared not his own Son*; Rom. viii. 32; *how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?---- Who is he that condemneth? it is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.*

2dly, If *We* follow the *example* of our Lord's Humility and Righteouſneſs here upon *Earth*, we may hope through Him to be made Partakers alſo of his exaltation in *Heaven*. *I go*, ſays he, *to prepare a place for you, and---- I will come again, and receive you unto myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo.* Again: *To him that overcometh*, (that is, who perſeveres in reſiſting the temptations of Sin;) *unto Him will I grant to ſit with Me in My Throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in His Throne.* Theſe Promiſes cauſed St. *Paul ſo* to expreſs himſelf, as if *God had* already *raiſed us up together* with Chriſt, and *made us* already *ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus*; Eph. ii. 6. The *manner of expreſſion*, is highly *figurative*; But the *literal* and proper Senſe of it is what he elſewhere thus explains: *We have Hope*, ſays he, *as an Anchor of the Soul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt, and which entreth into that within the Veil, whither our Fore-runner is entred for us.* And if we *have* this Hope in us, then ought we accordingly to *ſet our* affections *on things above, not on things in the Earth*; that *where our Treaſure is, there may our* Heart *be alſo*; that we may ſeek *thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God*, and where *our life is hid*, (that is, depoſited, laid up for us in the determinations of the divine good pleaſure, 'tis hid) *with Chriſt in God:* that *our* Converſation, (the Thoughts of our Home and final Abode) *may be in Heaven, from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; who, at his coming, ſhall *ſo change* Us, that *we* ſhall become like him, when *we ſhall ſee him as he is*; and, *as we have born the image of the Earthly, we ſhall alſo bear the image of the Heavenly.* By imploying our Meditations in *This* manner, upon our Lord's State of exaltation in Heaven; ſo as to make it a *continual Motive* to us, to *prepare* ourſelves to become finally Partakers of that promiſed inheritance; we ſhall contribute what in *Us* lies, towards fulfilling that Prophecy which he ſpake before his Death; *Joh.* xii. 32; *And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men unto me.*

3dly; *Another* proper and moſt *important* Uſe of the Doctrine before us, is as follows. If our Lord came down upon *Earth*, *to* put away Sin *by the Sacrifice of himſelf*; and if, in his State of Exaltation in *Heaven*, the Deſign of his continual interceſſion with God, and of his whole Government of the Church by his Spirit, be ſtill always one and the ſame, even the putting away of *Sin:* Then from hence we may learn how great and fatal a Corruption it is of Chriſtian Religion, for men who *live wickedly*, in a Courſe of *Debauchery*, or in the habitual Practice of *any known*

known Sin whatſoever, to expect to obtain Salvation by relying *preſumptuouſly upon* SERM. *the* Merits *of Chriſt*, or upon *His Interceſſion*, inſtead of *obeying* his *Commands* deli- LXXXIII. vered in the Goſpel. *The Blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God*, was ſhed, not to render men ſafe in unrighteous Living, but to *purge the conſcience* of ſuch as truly repent and amend, to *purge them from dead works to ſerve the living God*; Heb. ix. 14; The *End* why our Lord *gave himſelf for us*, being, *that he might* purify *to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. If this great End be attained; if (according to the language of St. *John*) *we walk in the Light*, (that is, in the practice of true virtue and holineſs,) even as *God is Light, and in Him is no darkneſs at all*; then indeed *the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son cleanſeth us from all* paſt *Sin*. But *if we ſay we have fellowſhip with* Him, *and* (ſtill) *walk in darkneſs*; (that is, continue to live wickedly, and yet hope for Benefit from the profeſſion of God's true religion from what Chriſt has either done or ſuffered for us;) *we lie, and do not the Truth*; 1 Joh. i. 6.

4*thly*, and *laſtly*: As from what has been ſaid, appears the *Reaſonableneſs* of mens applying to God through that *One* Mediator, whom *he* has appointed; ſo at the ſame Time appears likewiſe the *Folly*, of their ſetting up *Other* Mediators, of their *own* invention; ſuch as are Angels, Saints, the Bleſſed Virgin, and the like. For *there is One God*, ſays the Apoſtle, *and One Mediator between God and Men*. And as departing from *the One God and Father of All, who is above all, and through all, and in us all*, is the firſt and higheſt Species of Idolatry; ſo another ſort of the ſame Sin, is ſetting up falſe and imaginary *Mediators*, by *will-worſhip*, by *a voluntary Humility*, as St. *Paul* ſtiles it, *and worſhipping of Angels*; when men *intrude into things which they have not ſeen, vainly puffed up by their fleſhly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by Joints and Bands having nouriſhment miniſtred, and knit together, increaſeth with the increaſe of God*.

SERMON LXXXIV.

The Converſation of Chriſtians is in Heaven.

[*Preached on Aſcenſion-Day.*]

PHIL. iii. 20.

For our Converſation is in Heaven; from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

SERM. LXXXIV.

IN diſcourſing upon Theſe words of the Apoſtle, I ſhall 1*ſt* endeavour briefly to ſhow, *what* is the full *meaning* of this Phraſe, of *having our Converſation in Heaven*; and 2*dly*, *what* are the principal *Benefits and Advantages*, which may ariſe to good men from This conſideration.

I. As to the Signification of the Phraſe, *having our converſation in Heaven*; it may properly be underſtood to imply, three things.

1*ſt*,

SERM. LXXXIV.

1*ſt*. Our *Meditating* frequently upon That Heavenly State, That Kingdom of Truth, Virtue and Happineſs, which is propoſed to us as the Reward and End of our Chriſtian Warfare. To *converſe* with any Perſon *preſent*, ſignifies *delighting* in his *Company*, or being *concerned* in his *Affairs*. To be converſant with any perſon *abſent*, ſignifies holding mutual *intercourſe* and *correſpondence* with him; being *ſollicitous* about what is *done by* him, or *happens to* him. To have our converſation in a diſtant Place, ſignifies being *much There* in our *Minds*; deſiring to *have an influence* or *intereſt*, in what is done There; and judging, that What paſſes There, has an *influence* upon Us, *affects* us *nearly*, or *relates* to us more *immediately*. When therefore the Apoſtle affirms, as in the Text, that our *Converſation is in Heaven*; his meaning is, that though *our Perſons* at preſent dwell on *Earth*, yet our *greateſt Intereſt and Concerns* are in *Heaven*. Like a Merchant trading in a diſtant Country; his *preſent Abode* may be in *foreign parts*, but his *Eſtate*, his *Family*, his *ſettled Habitation*, is at *home*; and it is of *much more importance* to him, what the *laſting* State of his Affairs is *at Home*; than what happens to him *Abroad*, with regard to ſuch accidental *temporary* Circumſtances, as do not much affect his *main Concerns in his own Country*. Thus *Chriſtians*, have their *great*, their *laſting* Intereſt, in *Heaven*. And though they *cannot*, they *ought not*, any more than other men, to be *inſenſible* of what happens to them in this *ſhort and tranſitory* life, according to the *true proportion* of things, and their *real value*; yet every thing *here*, ought *chiefly* to be conſidered, with regard to the influence 'tis likely to have, upon our *future and eternal State*. Which right Judgment and Eſtimation of things, 'tis impoſſible men ſhould make; unleſs by frequent and ſerious *meditation*, they ſo *behold* the things *inviſible*, as to bring them to make *proportionably* as ſtrong an impreſſion upon the *Mind*, as *Earthly* Objects do upon the *Senſes*. Many Men, like the Brute Creatures which have No Underſtanding, ſeem hardly to think at all upon any thing, but what is *preſent* and *ſenſual*. But *Reaſon* in general, and *Chriſtianity* in particular, teaches us, and requires of us, to judge of things according to their *true* and *real Value*; and to be more concerned about things at preſent *inviſible*, if they be really of *greater* and more *laſting importance* to us, than about things which do *Now* more *immediately affect our Senſes*. St. *Paul*, the great Buſineſs of whoſe Life was the Care of the Churches; thus writes to the *Corinthians* when at a diſtance from them; *I verily*, ſays he, as *abſent in Body, but preſent in Spirit*; 1 Cor. v. 3; and to the *Coloſſians*; ch. ii. 5; *Though I be abſent in the Fleſh, yet am I with you in the Spirit, joying and beholding your Order, and the Stedfaſtneſs of your Faith in Chriſt*. The Deſcription the Apoſtle here gives of himſelf, with regard to the employment of his Thoughts upon his main Concern in *This Life*; is what every ſincere Chriſtian ought to make good, with regard to his Expectations in the *Life to come*. Though he be *in his Body* an Inhabitant upon Earth; and, ſo long as he continues ſo, ought not, after a Monkiſh, Superſtitious and Enthuſiaſtick manner, to neglect the Affairs of *Himſelf*, his *Family*, his *Friends*, or his *Country*; yet at the ſame time in *Spirit*, in the *bent* and *habitual Diſpoſition of his Mind*, in the *Direction* of the ultimate *View and Aim* of all his Actions, he may properly be ſaid to *converſe*, and to *Be*, in *Heaven*. Whoever *fears God* and *works righteouſneſs*, and lives with a conſtant Senſe of Religion upon his Mind; how little *Time*, or how ſmall *Abilities* ſoever he has for abſtract Meditation, may yet, even in the midſt of his worldly affairs, be truly ſaid, in *This* ſenſe, to have his *Converſation in Heaven*: Becauſe he lives according to the *Laws* of *Heaven*; has in his Mind the *Temper* of Heaven; and, by the Love of Truth, and Practice of Virtue, is in a continual Preparation for the *State* of *Heaven*. Nevertheleſs, tho' the *Practice of Virtue and Goodneſs* is indeed the *End* of all religion, yet frequent and ſerious *Meditation* is valuable as a *Means* to *promote* That *End*, and to *encourage* That *Practice*.

The proper Subjects *in particular* to be *meditated upon*, as being moſt likely to have an *immediate Influence* upon the Courſe of our Lives, and to cauſe our *Converſation* on *Earth* to be effectually preparative for that in *Heaven*; are, in the *firſt* place, the *Nature* of God, and of his *Relation to* Us: the conſideration of his being *himſelf* a Perſon infinitely *Holy*; a Lover of *Virtue* and all *Goodneſs*; a *Hater* of *Iniquity*,

SERM. LXXXIV.

Iniquity, of *Debauchery*, and of every *corrupt Practice*; a *Juſt* and *Righteous Governour of* all things; and a *bountiful Rewarder of* them who ſerve and obey him; *in whoſe Preſence* there will finally be *fulneſs of Joy*, and *at his right hand Pleaſures for ever more*.

In the *next* place is the Conſideration of Chriſt our *Great High-Prieſt*, the *Mediator of the New Covenant*; who gave *himſelf for us*, that by the *Doctrine and Example of* his *Life*, and by the *Merit and Influence of* his *Death*, he *might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar People zealous of good works*: Who is *now ſet down on the right hand of the Throne of God in the heavenly places*, to intercede for all thoſe that truly and effectually repent: And who, *at the end of the World*, unto all them *who with patient continuance in well-doing look for him, ſhall appear the ſecond time, without Sin, unto Salvation*.

The next part of this Contemplation, tending to make us *hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs*, by having *at preſent* our *Converſation in Heaven*; is the conſideration of the Company, by whom that region of Happineſs is poſſeſſed. The Society of Good *Angels*, who never *departed* from their firſt eſtate; and of Good *Men*, who by true Repentance are *returned* unto it. The Society of Holy *Angels*, who, going *in and out before the Throne of God, do always behold the Face of our Father*; even *the Father, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*: And the Society of Holy *Men*, who, having *waſhed their Robes in the Blood of the Lamb*, are by Him *preſented faultleſs before the Preſence of his Father's Glory with exceeding Joy*.

The *laſt* part of this Contemplation, is the conſideration of the Happineſs of this State itſelf, with regard to Ourſelves. And in *This reſpect* indeed, *it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be: But we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is*. At preſent *we ſee* only, *as through a glaſs, darkly*; For *Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive, the things that God has prepared for them that love him*: But Then, *we ſhall ſee face to face; and know, even as we are known*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. In *general* only, *This* we are *Now* aſſured of, and a ſufficient employment it is for our *Meditations* upon This Head; that the Happineſs of Heaven, tho' the *particulars* of it are not yet revealed, is a *Great* and *exceeding Weight of Glory*; to which the Apoſtle *reckons*, that nothing in *this preſent World* is *worthy to be compared*, 2 Cor. iv. 17; that it is a *Kingdom, which cannot be moved*; a *Treaſure, which neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt*, and to which *Thieves do not break through and ſteal*: That it is a Happineſs *pure and unmixed*; For *all tears ſhall then be wiped from* our *Eyes*; *and there ſhall be no more Death, neither ſorrow nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more Pain; for the former things are paſſed away*: Laſtly, that it is an enjoyment which will *ſatisfy* all our Deſires, an employment which will *improve* to the utmoſt all our Faculties; and, which is the Crown of all, will continue *for ever*; being, as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away*. I conclude This Head, with the words of a moſt excellent Writer of our own:

Archbp. Tillotſon. "O bleſſed Time, *ſaith he*, when Mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up of Life, and "Death and Sorrow ſhall be no more; —when we ſhall be eaſed of all our Pains, "and reſolved of all our Doubts, and be purged from all our Sins, and be freed "from all our Fears, and be happy beyond all our Hopes, and have all this Happineſs ſecured to us beyond the Power of Time and Change!" Let every man who lives in the Practice of Any known Vice, conſider ſeriouſly with himſelf, how for one morſel of meat he ſells this Birthright.

This is the *firſt* thing implied in the Phraſe of having *our Converſation in Heaven*; *meditating frequently and ſeriouſly upon the Happineſs of That State*.

2*dly*, Having *our Converſation in Heaven*, ſignifies, not only meditating upon the Happineſs of that State, but *practically and effectually ſetting our* Hearts and Affections *thereon*. Speculative *Meditations* within our *own Minds*, or *moving Diſcourſes* and fine *Deſcriptions* to *Others*, are of no Uſe; unleſs the things *meditated upon by us*, or *deſcribed to us*, affect our *Hearts*, and operate in their influence upon our *Lives* and *Actions*, as *Realities*, and not as *Imaginations*. The Perſons *Oppoſite* to thoſe whoſe converſation is in Heaven, (as they are deſcribed in the *Verſe before*

my

my Text) are thoſe *whoſe God is their Belly, who* mind *earthly things*, ver. 19. By SERM. way *of contraries* therefore, they whoſe converſation *is* in *Heaven*, are Thoſe only LXXXIV. who *mind*, (not who can *imagine* or *deſcribe*, but who *mind*,) that is, who in earneſt *attend to*, as to their proper and moſt important Concern, the things which are in *Heaven*: Rom. viii. 5; *They that are after the fleſh*, do mind *the things of the fleſh*; *and they that are after the Spirit*, do mind *the things of the Spirit*. The meaning is; As worldly and corrupt Minds, are much more concerned about their *Temporal*, than about their *eternal* Affairs; ſo, on the contrary, Perſons *truly religious*, tho' they *by no means neglect* the Concerns of this preſent Life, yet they are really *more ſollicitous*, they are *more rejoiced* or *grieved*, at the Proſpect of their *Eternal*, than of their *Temporal State*. This is what St. *Paul* exhorts us to, *Col.* iii. 1; *If ye be riſen with Chriſt*, ſeek *thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God: Set your* Affection *on things above, not on Things upon Earth: For ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Chriſt in God.* Ye are *dead*; that is, ye are by your Profeſſion in Baptiſm, *dead* with Chriſt; *dead with Chriſt from the rudiments of the World*; *buried with him by Baptiſm into Death*; *dead*, to all the vicious Deſires, to all the *ſinful* enjoyments of the World. *And your* Life (ſays he) *is hid with Chriſt in God*; that is, your *Hope*, (as it is expreſſed, *ch.* i. 5.) the Hope of eternal Life, is *laid up for you in Heaven*, with Chriſt our Saviour; laid up, *reſerved for* you, in the determinate Counſel of God, againſt the day of retribution: At which Time, *when Chriſt who is our Life, ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo appear with him in Glory*. The only *poſſible Means*, by which we can in This ſenſe fix our *Affections* by which we can in This ſenſe come to have our *converſation* habitually *in Heaven*; is, that we take care, by works of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, by a life of Virtue and real Goodneſs, to ſecure to ourſelves an *Intereſt* and a *Portion* There. *Lay not up*, ſays our Saviour, *treaſures upon Earth, but lay up for yourſelves treaſures in Heaven*; *For where your Treaſure is, there* will *your Heart be alſo*, Matt. vi. 21. The words next following to theſe, are difficult to be underſtood; unleſs *compared* with Theſe, by which their Senſe and Connexion may be explained: ver. 22. *The Light of the body*, ſays our Lord, *is the Eye*; *if therefore thine Eye be ſingle, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Light*; *But if thine Eye be Evil, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Darkneſs*; *If therefore the* Light *that is in thee be Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs!* The Meaning is: That *True Judgment* and *Right Diſcernment* of the Difference of Things, by which *Treaſure in Heaven* is *more valued* than *Treaſure upon Earth*; the Rewards of Virtue, than the Pleaſures of *Sin*; This *true Judgment*, I ſay, is to the *State* of the *Soul*, what the *Eye* is to the *Guidance and Direction* of the *Body*. If That which ſhould be our *Guide* and our *Rule*, be itſelf *dark*, be itſelf *fundamentally erroneous*; how miſerable muſt our Errors be!

3*dly*, Having *our Converſation in Heaven*, ſignifies in the laſt place, according to the moſt ſtrict and proper Import of the word in the Original; having our Citizenſhip, our *Home*, our proper *Country* and *Habitation* there. The State of *Heaven*, the *Happineſs* which God has promiſed in the Life to come, to thoſe who ſhall qualify themſelves for it by the Habits of Virtue *here*; is in Scripture repreſented under the deſcription of a glorious *City*; Rev. xxi. 10: *He ſhewed me that great City, the Holy Jeruſalem, deſcending out of Heaven from God*; *having the Glory of God*, and ſo on. And even the *Antient* Prophets, uſed from the beginning the ſame expreſſions; As appears in many paſſages of *Iſaiah*; And *Tobit* xiii. 16; *Jeruſalem*, ſaith he, *ſhall be built up with Saphires, and her Walls —— with pure Gold.* Of this *new* and heavenly *Jeruſalem*, the Apoſtle deſcribes the *Patriarchs of old* to have been *Citizens*, while their *dwelling on Earth* was but as in a *foreign Country*: Heb. xi. 9; *By Faith, Abraham* ſojourned *in the land of Promiſe, as in a* ſtrange *Country*; —— *For he looked for a* City *which hath Foundations*; (in the original it is, *he expected* The *City which hath* The *Foundations*; that is, the Foundations of *precious Stones*, alluding to the Prophetic expreſſions;) *whoſe Builder and Maker is God:* And *ver.* 13: *Theſe all*, that is, the Patriarchs, *died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off*; *and were perſuaded of them and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*; *For they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a Country*, even *a*---

SERM. LXXXIV.

better Country, that is, an heavenly; Wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City. And *All* who imitate the Obedience of theſe Patriarchs, in all Ages and in all Nations of the World, by a Life of Virtue and true Goodneſs; are in like manner repreſented in Scripture, as being Members of the ſame heavenly *City*: Eph. ii. 19; *Ye are no more ſtrangers and Foreigners, but* Fellow-citizens *with the Saints, and of the houſhold of God; and are built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone; In whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord.* In the *preſent* world, upon account of the tranſitorineſs of This mortal life, we are ſtyled *Strangers* and *Sojourners*, 1 Chr. xxix. 15; and
1 Pet. 2. 11. are exhorted, as *Pilgrims*, to *paſs the Time of our* ſojourning *here in Fear*, 1 Pet. i. 17. For *here we have no continuing City, but we ſeek One to come*, Heb. xiii. 14. *A city to come*; that is, the *New*, the *heavenly Jeruſalem*: For ſo St. *Paul* tells us, *Gal.* iv. 26; *Jeruſalem which is above, is the Mother of us all*; that is, our proper *Home* and *Country*. Heb. xii. 22; *Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the* City *of the Living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, To the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born that are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of All, and to the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, And to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant.* In purſuance of which elegant Deſcription, virtuous and good men, *raiſed and quickned together with Chriſt* from the *Death* of *Sin*, are, by a lively figure, ſaid to *ſit together* (even *Now*) *in* heavenly *places*, *in* (or *with*) *Chriſt Jeſus*, Eph. ii. 6. And to *dwell in Heaven*: Rev. xiii. 6. *he*, (that is, Antichriſtian Tyranny) *opened his mouth in Blaſphemy againſt God, to blaſpheme his Name and his Tabernacle, and them that* dwell in Heaven. To *blaſpheme them that dwell in Heaven*; that is, as it is explained in the following Verſe, to *make War with* and *overcome* the *Saints*; to perſecute the true Worſhippers of God, whoſe *Converſation is in Heaven.*

II. Having thus at large explained the *Meaning* of this Phraſe, of having *our Converſation in Heaven*; it remains that I proceed, in the 2*d* place, to conſider the *Uſes* and *Advantages* which may ariſe to us therefrom. And

1*ſt*, If we take the Phraſe in Either of the *Two former* Senſes, as ſignifying that we *Meditate* frequently upon the Heavenly State, or (which is the natural *conſequence* of delighting in ſuch Meditation,) ſet our *Hearts and Affections* thereon; the Advantage and Benefit of ſo doing, is, that it will *continually* put us upon *preparing* and *qualifying* ourſelves, by the Practice of Virtue, for the enjoyment of That Bleſſed State: *Eccluſ.* vii. 36; *Whatſoever thou takeſt in hand, remember the* End, *and thou ſhalt never do amiſs.* The Great reaſon, why the World is generally ſo vicious; is becauſe men ſeldom *meditate* upon the final Conſequences of Wickedneſs, and ſeldom ſeriouſly reflect upon the real State of their own Souls. They are like one, who, walking towards a Precipice, ſhuts his Eyes, and perceives not that there is Any Danger. *Conſideration*, is the *Eye* of the Soul: And if this *Light* that is in us, be itſelf Darkneſs; if our *Meditations* be never fixed upon the things which can no otherwiſe be diſcerned but by ſerious and impartial *Meditation*; how great muſt the Darkneſs and Blindneſs of our Minds be! Men upon a Bed of Sickneſs, and at the Approach of Death, generally have very right Notions of this Matter; And ſince what will *Then* be True, we are ſure cannot but be equally True *Now*; wiſe men will always endeavour, to fix thoſe Thoughts upon their Minds by timely Attention, and make them uſeful *at preſent*; which *hereafter* will fix *themſelves* upon the Mind, whether a man will or no, when perhaps it may be too late for them to be of Any Uſe to him. *Conſiderate* Chriſtians *wait* continually *for the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 Cor. i. 7; *Denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts; living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the Great God, and of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* Thus did the *Apoſtles themſelves*; and to This did they continually exhort *Others*, as in the Text; *Brethren*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *be Followers together of Me, and mark them which walk ſo as ye have Us for an example*;---*For* Our *converſation is in Heaven, from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

More *particularly*, Having *our converſation in Heaven*, as it ſignifies *meditating* upon the *Preſence and Attributes of* God, will naturally be upon our Minds a *ſtrong*

Motive

Motive and a *conſtant Aſſiſtance*, to *Purity* and *Holineſs* of Life. For if hereafter we ſhall therefore *be like him*, becauſe *we ſhall ſee him as he is*; at preſent alſo in proportion we cannot but imitate him, if by ſerious *meditation* we accuſtom ourſelves to live *as Seeing him who is inviſible*. And therefore St. *John* rightly infers, 1 *Joh.* iii. 3; *Every man that hath This Hope in him, purifies himſelf even as he is pure.* SERM. LXXXIV.

Again: *Converſing in Heaven*, as it ſignifies *meditating* on the Company by whom that region of Happineſs is poſſeſt; *an innumerable Company of Angels, and the Spirits of juſt men made perfect*, living together in compleat and uninterrupted Love; and *Jeſus* himſelf, *the Mediator of the New Covenant*, who *loved us, and gave himſelf for us* All: under *This* View, it cannot but be a powerful Argument perpetually upon our Minds, to live *here* alſo, as preparative to That more perfect State, in mutual *Love, Forbearance, and univerſal Charity.*

Laſtly, As it ſignifies *meditating* on the *Greatneſs and Duration of the* Happineſs itſelf, which we ſhall There enjoy; it is the great Security, to preſerve us from being overcome at any time by the Temptations of worldly *Proſperity*, or by the Fears of Temporal *Adverſity*. *I reckon*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *that the Sufferings of this preſent world, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us. For which cauſe we faint not; but though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen, are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are eternal*; 2 Cor. iv. 16. By This Faith, the Martyrs of old *ſuffered themſelves to be* tortured, *not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection*; Heb. xi. 35. By This Faith, *Moſes choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon; eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater Riches than the Treaſures in Egypt; for he had reſpect unto the recompence of Reward*; ver. 25, 26. And our Saviour himſelf; *ch.* xii. 2; *for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the Shame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Throne of God.* But, Rom. viii. 18.

2*dly*, And to Conclude. If we underſtand the Phraſe, *having our Converſation in Heaven*, to ſignify in the *latter* Senſe (according to the moſt *ſtrict and proper* Meaning of the words in the Original,) *having our* Citizenſhip, *our Home, our proper Country or Habitation in Heaven*, and conſequently *looking upon ourſelves as Members and Subjects of That City or Kingdom which is above:* If we conſider it under *This* View, the obvious Inference from hence is, that then we ought conſtantly to endeavour to obey the *Laws of That* Kingdom, that is, the Commandments of God; leſt if, during our Pilgrimage here in a *foreign* Country, we live contrary to the Laws of Heaven, we be hereafter rejected at our return, and refuſed admittance into our *own* City: *Rev.* xxii. 14; *Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in thro' the Gates into the City; For without, are dogs and ſorcerers, and whoremongers and murderers and Idolaters, and whoſoever loveth and maketh a Lie.* For *there ſhall in no wiſe enter into it any thing that defileth; neither whatſoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lie.* And the ſame thing is expreſſed by our Saviour in the Goſpel; *Luke* xiii. 26. When ye *begin to ſay, Lord, open unto us*; for —— *we have eaten and drunk in thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our Streets; he ſhall ſay, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye Workers of Iniquity.* The Laws of our heavenly Country, and the Cuſtoms of a vicious World, are contrary to each other. *Rom.* vii. 22; *I delight in the Law of God after the inward man; but I ſee another Law in my Members, warring againſt the Law of my mind: For the Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh; and Theſe are contrary the One to the Other*; Gal. v. 17. This being the Caſe; it follows therefore, as St. *James* concludes, ch. iv. 4; that *whoſoever will be a Friend of the World*, of the *ſinful* and *debauched*, of the *vicious* and *corrupt* World, muſt needs be *an Enemy of God: Becauſe the Carnal mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be*; Rom. viii. 7. For This reaſon, the Apoſtle *beſeeches us*, as being *Strangers and Pilgrims* here, ch. xxi. 27.

to

SERM. LXXXIV. *to abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which* war *againſt the Soul*; that is, which unfit us for our heavenly Country, the habitation of everlaſting Righteouſneſs and Peace; 1 *Pet.* ii. 11: and exhorts us, *not to be conformed to this World*, Rom. xii. 2. *but to be transformed by the renewing of our Mind*; that is, to *preſs forward towards the Mark of the Prize of our High Calling, forgetting thoſe things which are behind*: After the example of the Patriarchs; *Heb.* xi. 15; who *truly if they had been mindful of That Country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; But now they deſire a better Country, that is, an Heavenly.* Where, if *We* alſo have our converſation *Now*, we ſhall together with *them* be glorified likewiſe *hereafter*.

SERMON

SERMON LXXXV.

Of the Spiritual Nature of the GOSPEL.

[*Preached on Whitſunday.*]

2 COR. iii. 17, 18.

Now the Lord is That Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty; But we all with open face, beholding as in a glaſs the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

THE Holy Ghoſt having been poured forth upon the Apoſtles at Pentecoſt in ſo very ſingular and plentiful a manner, as that, *before* that time, 'tis ſaid, comparatively, *not to have been given at all*; Joh. vii. 39; and Thoſe who were not yet acquainted with *That* day's Miracle, are repreſented as not having *heard* ſo much as whether *there* was *any Holy Ghoſt*, Acts xix. 2; that is, whether there had *yet* been *any* ſuch *plentiful Effuſion* of it, as the Prophets had foretold: For This reaſon, St. *Paul* in the 8*th* verſe of this Chapter, where- SERM. LXXXV.

SERM. LXXXV.

whereof my Text is the Concluſion, elegantly ſtiles *the Goſpel*, by way of Eminence, the *Miniſtration of the* Spirit. And from That conſideration, through the *whole* chapter, he magnifies the *Doctrine of Chriſt*, as being more clear and plain, more powerful and efficacious, more illuſtrious and glorious, than the *Law of Moſes*. Ver. 3; *Ye are*, ſaith he, *the epiſtle of Chriſt, miniſtred by Us, written not with ink, but with the* Spirit *of the living God; not in tables of ſtone, but in the fleſhly tables of the heart*: His meaning is, The Power and Efficacy of the *Goſpel*, is as much greater than that of the *Law*, as can be expreſſed by *comparing* that which is written in a *Book*, with that which is imprinted inwardly in the very *Heart and Soul itſelf*. The ſame Argument he purſues; ver. 6; *God hath made us able miniſters of the New Teſtament, not of the letter, but of the* Spirit; *for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life*; That is, The Goſpel gives us thoſe *ſpiritual* precepts, whereof the *legal* Ordinances were but *types and ſhadows*; (that is the meaning of their being called the *letter* or *dead letter*;) and teaches us the way to *eternal Life*, whereas the rigour of the Law could end only in mens *condemnation*. And from hence he proceeds to *magnify* the glorious manifeſtation of the *Goſpel*, by *comparing* it with the Glory that ſhined in *Moſes*'s countenance; which, though ſo bright that the children of *Iſrael* could not ſtedfaſtly behold it, yet was but temporary and tranſient, and only a type or figure of that permanent glory of the Goſpel, which was to continue for ever; ver. 7; *If the miniſtration of* Death, *written and engraven in ſtones, was glorious, ſo that the children of Iſrael could not ſtedfaſtly behold the face of Moſes for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; How ſhall not the miniſtration of the* Spirit *be rather glorious? For if the miniſtration of* condemnation *be glory, much more doth the miniſtration of* righteouſneſs, (of *juſtification*, it ſhould be rendred,) *exceed in glory*; —— *For if That which is done away was glorious, much more That which remaineth* (That which is Perpetual) *is glorious*. And hereupon he takes occaſion elegantly to deſcribe the Blindneſs of the *Jews* after our Saviour's time, in not ſeeing through the types and figures and imperfect notices of the Old Teſtament; he deſcribes it elegantly, by comparing it to the *Veil* which *Moſes* put upon his Face to conceal the Brightneſs of it: Ver. xiv; *Their Minds* (ſaith he) *were blinded; For until This day remaineth the ſame Veil untaken away, in the reading of the Old Teſtament; which Veil is done away in Chriſt: But even unto This day, when Moſes is read, the Veil is upon their Heart. Nevertheleſs, when it ſhall turn to the Lord*, (that is, when they ſhall believe in Chriſt,) *the Veil ſhall be taken away*. And then he ſums up and concludes his whole Diſcourſe, in the words of the Text: *Now the Lord* (ſays he) *is That* Spirit; *and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty. But We All with open face, beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*. The words are in themſelves ſomewhat difficult, and have in them ſeveral phraſes very different from our preſent manner of expreſſing things: But the *general* deſign of them appears in ſome meaſure, from the brief explication now given of the foregoing part of the chapter, whereby they are introduced; and I ſhall now proceed to explain them more *particularly*, by conſidering diſtinctly the ſeveral expreſſions in the order they lie.

The *Lord*, ſays the Apoſtle, is *That Spirit*. That is, *Chriſt*, the *Goſpel* or *Doctrine* of Chriſt, is *That Spirit* I have been ſpeaking of in this whole Diſcourſe; That *Spirit*, or *end and deſign* of the Law, which giveth *life*, or ſhows men the way to *juſtification*; in oppoſition to the *dead letter* and to the *rigour* of the law, which leads only to *condemnation*: That *Spirit* or final *intent* of the law, which is to continue *for ever*, in oppoſition to thoſe mere *types and ſhadows*, which were ſoon *to be done away*; That *Spirit* or full *Meaning and Signification* of the law, which is oppoſed to the *Veil of ignorance* and *partial underſtanding* of it.

The *Lord, is that Spirit*: The word, *Lord*, is uſed here to ſignify the *Goſpel* or *Doctrine of Chriſt*, by the ſame figure of ſpeaking, as St. *Paul* elſewhere uſes, when he adviſes Chriſtians to marry *only* in *the Lord*, that is, to *Chriſtians*, to ſuch only as have *received the Goſpel*; and when he ſpeaks of the *dead* in *Chriſt*; *i.e.* of thoſe who died in the profeſſion and practice of the true Religion; and commands us to *put* on *Chriſt*, *i.e.* to obey his Doctrine.

The

The phraſe, That *Spirit*, is made uſe of to ſignify the *True Meaning* and *final* *Intent* of the Law; becauſe the oppoſite words, *Fleſh* and *Letter*, ſignify on the contrary the mere *Shadow or appearance* of a thing, without the *real Subſtance* and *true Intention*. Thus *Joh.* vi. 63; *It is the* Spirit, ſaith our Saviour, *that quickneth, the* Fleſh *profiteth nothing; The words that I ſpake unto you, they are Spirit and they are Life.* Again, ver. 6; of This chapter in which the Text is, *Able miniſters of the New Teſtament, not of the* Letter, *but of the* Spirit: And *Rom.* vii. 6; *That we ſhould ſerve in newneſs of* Spirit, *and not in the oldneſs of the* Letter: The meaning of which is explained; ch. ii. 29; *He is a Jew, which is one* inwardly, *and circumciſion is that of the* Heart, *in the* Spirit, *and not in the* Letter, *whoſe praiſe is not of Men, but of God.* As therefore the law of *Moſes*, upon account of its many ritual obſervances, is by a very ſignificant Figure, in ſeveral places of St. *Paul*'s epiſtles, called *Fleſh*; ſo here on the contrary, concerning the *Goſpel* of Chriſt, which was the End of thoſe types, it is with no leſs propriety and ſignificancy affirmed, that *the Lord is that Spirit.* SERM. LXXXV.

It follows, *And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty: Liberty*, in the firſt place, from that *Veil of ignorance and obſcurity*, which remained upon the *Hearts*, and perplexed the *Underſtandings* of the unbelieving *Jews*, when the Old Teſtament was read to them: In oppoſition to which, the Apoſtle argues; ver. 12 of this chapter, that We *uſe great* plainneſs *of Speech, and not as Moſes which put a Veil over his Face*; And upon this account he ſtiles the Goſpel, *the* Manifeſtation *of the Truth*; ch. iv. 2; and *the Spirit of* Wiſdom and Revelation; *Eph.* i. 17.

Then, in the next place, *Liberty* from the bondage of that *yoke* of Ceremonies, *which neither our Fathers nor We*, ſays St. *Peter*, *were able to bear*; Acts x. 15. Concerning which numerous and burdenſome rites, St. *Paul* alſo is to be underſtood, when he rejoices that we *are now delivered from the law*; Rom. vii. 6; and compares the *Jews*, who were under theſe legal Obligations, to Servants or to Children yet under Age, *Gal.* iv. 3; and exhorts thoſe, who by embracing the Goſpel were diſcharged from that Law, to *ſtand faſt in the* Liberty *wherewith Chriſt had made them free, and not to be intangled again with the yoke of bondage*: ch. v. 1. Which liberty nevertheleſs, leſt any man ſhould ſo miſinterpret, as to think himſelf diſcharged thereby from *moral* as well as *ritual* obligations, (which is the abſurd Uſe Some in modern times have made of theſe Texts,) he takes care to add a very expreſs caution; ver. 13; *Brethren, ye* have *indeed been called unto Liberty; only uſe not Liberty for an occaſion to the Fleſh:* That is; Do not, under pretence of being ſet free from the *Moſaic Obſervations*, run into *immoralities*, which are Breaches of God's everlaſting Law: And St. *Peter* in like manner; 1 *Pet.* ii. 16; *As free, yet not uſing your Liberty for a cloke of maliciouſneſs*, (or, *as an Excuſe for Immoralities*,) *but as the Servants of God.*

Add to This, that by the *Liberty* which the Text affirms *is* always *There, where is the Spirit of the Lord*; *i. e.* where-ever the Goſpel prevails in Faith and Practice; is meant alſo a Liberty from that *Fear* and *Terror*, which under the Law, could not but make men (as the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* expreſſes it) *all their life-time ſubject to bondage*; till they were aſſured of Pardon by the reconciliation of Chriſt, for ſuch *things from which they could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes.* In This ſenſe it is, that St. *James* uſes the word, when he ſtiles the Goſpel *the perfect Law of Liberty*; Jam. i. 25. And by This is eaſy to be underſtood That otherwiſe difficult expreſſion of St *Paul*; Rom. viii. 15; *Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to Fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; The meaning is, we have Now, through the reconciliation of Chriſt, free Acceſs to God, not as Servants to a ſtrict Maſter, but as Sons to a merciful and compaſſionate Father. Which reconciliation itſelf, ought nevertheleſs to be always carefully ſo underſtood, not as if God was in Himſelf ſevere and cruel *before* the interpoſition of Chriſt; but that God of his own original and eternal Goodneſs, freely provided for us That reconciliation *through* Chriſt, which his infinite Wiſdom judged to be the propereſt Method of extending his compaſſion to us.

Laſtly,

SERM. LXXXV.

Laſtly, *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is* Liberty; not only from the Terrour of *paſt* Sins, through the Redemption of Chriſt; but alſo Liberty from the *Power and Dominion* of Sin for the time to come, through the aſſiſtance of his Spirit. In This ſenſe our Saviour uſes the word; St. *Joh.* viii. 36, *If the Son* (ſays he) *ſhall make you free, ye ſhall be free indeed*; *free*, in oppoſition to what is expreſſed in the 34*th* verſe, Servants *of Sin*. St. *Paul* in like manner; Rom. viii. 2; *The Law of the Spirit of Life in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made me* free *from the Law of Sin and Death*; free, from the Slavery and Dominion of Wickedneſs; *delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

The words next following in the Text, But *we all with open Face*, are not to be underſtood by way of *oppoſition* to what went before; For *That* takes away the Clearneſs of the Senſe: But the Connexion is, by way of explication of, or Inference from, the words immediately foregoing: *Where the Spirit of the Lord is*, where the Goſpel prevails effectually, *There is Liberty*; And *We all*, or, *And* therefore *we all*, all true Chriſtians, do *with open Face*, not through an *obſcure Veil* as the *Jews*, but with *open face behold the glory of the Lord.*

The phraſe, *with open face*, ſignifies as much as, *clearly*, *plainly*, and *diſtinctly*; not in *types* and *ſhadows*, not in *obſcure glympſes* and *faint repreſentations*, not in *remote hints* and *diſtant proſpects*; but with a *full and direct* view, an immediate intuition as of the *Subſtance* and *reality* of things *preſent* and *actually before us*. *We* behold the myſtery of God in Chriſt, *not* as the children of *Iſrael* ſaw the brightneſs of *Moſes*'s countenance *thro' the Veil*, (which is what the Apoſtle here alludes to;) *but* with *open face*, as *Moſes himſelf* is deſcribed to have ſeen the Lord: Exod. xxxiii. 11; *The Lord ſpake unto Moſes face to face, as a man ſpeaketh unto his Friend*: And Num. xii. 8; *With Him will I ſpeak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark ſpeeches; and the ſimilitude of the Lord ſhall he behold.* Thus to Us *Chriſtians*, the Myſtery of God's reconciliation to Sinners by the Method of the Goſpel, *the Riches of the glory of this myſtery* (as St. *Paul* ſtiles it,) Col. i. 27; *even the myſtery which had been hid from Ages and from Generations; is now made* plain and *manifeſt*: ſo plain and open, as to be called by way of Eminence, 2 *Cor.* iv. 2; *The* Manifeſtation *of the Truth.*

We *all, with open face, beholding* the Glory of the Lord: That theſe words, the *Glory of the Lord*, are to be underſtood, not in the literal, but in a figurative ſenſe, to ſignify the *clear and* glorious *manifeſtation of the Will of God by the Goſpel*; is evident, as from the whole Connexion of the Apoſtle's diſcourſe in *this* place, ſo from the many *other* paſſages of Scripture, wherein the Goſpel is ſtiled in like manner, *the riches of God's* Glory, *Rom.* ix. 23; *the riches of the* Glory *of this myſtery*, Col. i. 27; *the* Glory *as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth*, Joh. i. 14; *the Light of the* glorious *Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 4, and ver. 6; *the Light of the Knowledge of the* Glory *of God, ſhining in our Heart.* The words of that whole verſe are very remarkable; *God, who commanded the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs*, (that is, who manifeſted his Glory *originally* in the *firſt Creation* of Things) the ſame God *hath ſhined in our hearts* (has manifeſted his Glory the *ſecond* time no leſs conſpicuouſly in our *redemption*;) *hath ſhined in our hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt.* And theſe two laſt expreſſions, *Chriſt*'s being the Image *of God*; and the *Light of the Knowledge of God's Glory, ſhining upon us in the* Face (or in the *Perſon*) *of Chriſt*; open to us the Ground and Meaning, of that *Similitude* the Apoſtle interpoſes in this part of the Text.

Beholding as in a Glaſs, *the Glory of the Lord.* That which he hereby intended to expreſs, is, that in *Chriſt*, who is the *Image of the inviſible God*, and the *great Revealer of his Will*, we *clearly and plainly* behold the *whole pleaſure of God towards us.* For, *the Father, no man hath ſeen at any time; no man* hath *ſeen, nor* can *ſee*; but *the only-begotten* Son, *which is in his Boſom*, He *has declared him*; and has declared him *ſo plainly*, that *he who has ſeen* me, ſaith our Saviour, *has ſeen the* Father, *Joh.* xiv. 9. There is a phraſe, very *like* to This in the Text, uſed in a *contrary* ſenſe by the ſame Apoſtle, in his former Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, ch. xiii. 12. Now (ſays he) *we ſee through a glaſs darkly, but* Then *face to face.* In which paſſage, *ſeeing through a* glaſs, ſignifies ſeeing *darkly or obſcurely*, in *oppoſition*

to

to beholding *plainly*, *face to face:* But here in the Text, the phraſe ſignifies on the contrary, ſeeing *clearly or plainly*; and is the very *ſame* as, *beholding face to face: We all, with open face, beholding as in a* glaſs, *the Glory of the Lord.* The words in the Original, are in Both places more expreſſive, than in the Tranſlation; and ſhow plainly the Reaſon of this different Signification. In *one* place, the word, which we render, *glaſs*, ſignifies a *perſpective-glaſs*; which brings diſtant things into the reach indeed of our Sight, but ſtill very *obſcurely*, *imperfectly*, *and indiſtinctly*; and does therefore very aptly and by a moſt proper ſimilitude expreſs That view of a future ſtate, which we have by Faith and not by Sight. But now in this *other* paſſage in the Text, the word which we render, *glaſs*, ſignifies a *Mirrour* or *Looking-glaſs*, which on the contrary repreſents things *plainly and diſtinctly*, *face to face*; and therefore it no leſs aptly repreſents that clear *Light of the Knowledge of the Glory* and Will *of God*, which *ſhines* to us (ſaith the Apoſtle) *in the* Face *of Jeſus Chriſt. We all, with open face, beholding as in a* glaſs *the Glory of the Lord.* SERM. LXXXV.

It follows, *Are changed into the ſame Image:* The meaning is, As *Chriſt* is, by nature, the perfect *Image* of God; ſo *We*, by communication of *Light* and *Knowledge* from him, and by the practice of *Righteouſneſs* and true *Holineſs*, in Obedience *to* him and Imitation *of* him, are transformed *into the ſame Image.* As *Chriſt* is, by nature, the *Son of God*; ſo *We*, by *Adoption*, and by the *Fruits of his* Spirit *dwelling in us*, have *this Love beſtowed upon us*, that *We* alſo, *ſhould be called the Sons of God.* For *of* his *Fulneſs have we all received, and grace for grace*, Joh. i. 16. That is, Through the *Fulneſs* of thoſe Divine Perfections, and of that *Grace* which was conferred upon *Him* without meaſure; God has communicated to *Us* a *proportionable* Fulneſs of Divine Knowledge and Virtue, according to *our* capacities; and *Grace*, that is, Mercy and Favour, *according to the meaſure of the Gift of Chriſt.*

But more particularly; Being *changed into the ſame* Image *with Chriſt*, ſignifies Two things; *Firſt*, being made like to him in *Holineſs here*; and *Secondly*, being made like him in *Glory hereafter. Firſt*, being *changed into the ſame* Image *with Chriſt*, ſignifies, being made like to him in *Holineſs here.* The *Image* of *God* in the mind of *Man*, is *Virtue and true Righteouſneſs*; and therefore, when the Scripture ſpeaks of mens reforming from Vice, or improving in Virtue; it is a very lively deſcription of the Excellency of their State, to expreſs it by their being transformed into the *Image* of God, or being made after his *Similitude or Likeneſs.* Thus the Pſalmiſt; *As for me*, ſaith he, *I will behold thy preſence in righteouſneſs; and when I awake up after thy* Likeneſs, *I ſhall be ſatisfied with it*, Pſ. xvii. 16. And the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, Rom. viii. 29; *Whom he did foreknow, he alſo did predeſtinate, to be conformed to the* Image *of his Son, that he might be the firſt-born among many brethren.* That God's *predeſtinating men to be conformed to the Image of his Son*, does not here ſignify, decreeing concerning the *Perſons*, what they neceſſarily ſhould *do*; but decreeing concerning the *Conditions*, what he would have *them do*; is evident from the parallel place, *Eph.* ii. 10. where the ſame Apoſtle tells us that it was, not the *perſons*, but the *good works*, which *God* before ordained, *that we ſhould walk in them.* Again, *Eph.* iv. 23. Exhorting men to the practice of Virtue, he *Thus* expreſſes himſelf; *Be ye renewed* (ſays he) *in the Spirit of your Mind*,---after God, (after the example and ſimilitude of God,)----*in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*; *After* the *Image* of Him that created you; as it is, *Col.* iii. 10. Tranſformed *by the renewing of your Mind*; as he expreſſes it, *Rom.* xii. 2.

Our Saviour himſelf in his Prayer, delivering the ſame Notion, ſpeaks after the following manner, *Joh.* xvii. 22; *The Glory which thou gaveſt Me, I have given Them, that They may be One even as We are One:* His Meaning is the ſame as That in the Text, *We beholding as in a glaſs the Glory of the Lord*, (*the Light of the* Knowledge *of the Glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, as it is explained immediately after,) *are changed into the ſame* Image, are made partakers of *his Glory*, are *made* (as St. *Paul* elſewhere ſpeaks) *the* righteouſneſs *of God in Him.* This is the *firſt* ſignification of the phraſe, our being made like to Chriſt in works of *righteouſneſs here.*

SERM. LXXXV.

Col. iii. 4. Phil. iii. 21.

2*dly*, Being *changed into the ſame* Image *with Chriſt*, ſignifies alſo being made like him in *Glory hereafter*. Thus 1 *Cor.* xv. 49; *As we have born the* Image *of the Earthy, we ſhall alſo bear the* Image *of the Heavenly*: For, *when Chriſt who is our life ſhall appear, then ſhall We alſo appear with him in glory*: And *He ſhall change* this our *vile Body, that it may be faſhioned* like *unto his glorious Body, according to that* mighty *working, whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf*. St. *John* adds *another particular reaſon, why* we ſhall in this ſenſe be changed into the ſame Image with Chriſt; 1 *Joh.* iii, 2: *We know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be* like *him*; For, ſays he, *we ſhall ſee him as he is*: The words are a perfect Explication of thoſe in the Text; *we all with open face* beholding *the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image*.

The *Next* expreſſion, *from Glory to Glory*, may be underſtood to ſignify the manner *of* Communication of *Chriſt's* Glory to *Us*, whether in the way of *Righteouſneſs* here, or of *Happineſs* hereafter. *We beholding the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image* from Glory to Glory; that is, by Communication of *Glory* to Us, from His *Glory*: According to that Expreſſion of our Saviour before-cited, *Joh.* xvii. 22; *The Glory which thou gaveſt Me, I have given Them*; and that of the Evangeliſt, *Of* his *Fulneſs have we all received* Fulneſs, *and Grace for* (or *from*) His *Grace*.

But the *more* natural and obvious Meaning of the words, *from Glory to Glory*, is, from *one degree of Glory to another*: We *are changed into the ſame Image* from Glory to Glory: That is, from our Likeneſs to Chriſt in works of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs *here*, we ſhall improve and go forward unto a further and more glorious Likeneſs to him in the Enjoyment of eternal Happineſs *hereafter*. And this is the *more* probable to be the true Senſe of the words, becauſe it is the Nature or Idiom of the *Jewiſh* language, to expreſs any improvement in *degree*, by a *repetition* of the ſame word. Thus *Pſ.* lxxxiv. 7; *They ſhall go* from ſtrength to ſtrength; that is, from one degree of ſtrength to another: And *Rom.* i. 17; *In the Goſpel, the Righteouſneſs of God*, (or the *Mercy of God*,) *is revealed* from Faith to Faith; that is, from one degree of Faith to another; from one degree of Clearneſs of revelation, to another; from a leſs clear diſpenſation under the *Law*, to a clearer one under the *Goſpel*. And Thus therefore in the Text likewiſe, *from Glory to Glory*, may well be underſtood to ſignify, *from one degree of Glory to another*; from a *leſs* degree *here*, to a *greater* and more perfect degree *hereafter*.

Laſtly, The Apoſtle concludes the Whole, with the addition of theſe words, *even as by the* Spirit *of the Lord*. The meaning of which is, that all theſe things he had hitherto been diſcourſing upon, were accompliſhed in ſuch a *manner*, in ſo wiſe, ſo effectual, ſo glorious a manner, as became the Dignity of the Great Agent, and were worthy the Operation of the *Spirit of God*. The *clear Revealing* the Goſpel, to be the *Spirit* and End of the Law: The *Liberty* procured men by this merciful Diſpenſation, from the Burden and from the Terror of the Law, from the Guilt of paſt Sin by Pardon, which is *Juſtification*; and from the Dominion of Sin for the time to come, which is *Sanctification*: The full and diſtinct *Manifeſtation* of the glorious *Purpoſe* of God in Chriſt, of bringing men through him to everlaſting Salvation: The *Communication* of this Glory of *Chriſt* to *Us*, by our being *conformed* to *his Image* in *Righteouſneſs here*, and in *Glory hereafter*: All Theſe are the Fruits of that *One and the ſame Spirit*, which *worketh all in all*, and *diſtributeth Gifts to every man ſeverally according to the Will of God*: *That* Spirit, which inſpired the Predictions of the Prophets, which worked Miracles by the Apoſtles, which ſpread the Goſpel by the Gift of Tongues, which rejoices when Men embrace the Doctrine of Chriſt, and aſſiſts them in practiſing it, and ſupports them in ſuffering for it, and brings them finally unto Glory by it. As St. *Paul* excellently argues, *Rom.* viii. 10, 11; *If Chriſt be in you, the Body is dead, becauſe of Sin; but the Spirit is Life, becauſe of Righteouſneſs*: *And if the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the Dead, dwell in you; he that raiſed up Chriſt from the Dead, ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*.

The Application of what has been ſaid, is: *Firſt*, from the true Explication of theſe words, *The Lord is That Spirit*, we may take occaſion to obſerve, that in all

all *other* places likewiſe of St. *Paul*'s epiſtles, where the word, *Spirit*, is oppoſed to, *The letter* or *the Dead letter*, to *Fleſh* or *carnal Ordinances*; it always ſignifies the *Goſpel*, or the *ſpiritual* and *moral* Precepts of Chriſt, in oppoſition to the *Ceremonies* of the Law of *Moſes*. Which Obſervation is of great Uſe, againſt thoſe who would make Religion to conſiſt, not in the Practice of Virtue and true Righteouſneſs, but in unintelligible myſtical and enthuſiaſtick Notions.

Secondly, From the right underſtanding of theſe next words, *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty*; we may learn the true interpretation of thoſe *many* Paſſages, wherein the Apoſtle contends earneſtly for the *Liberty* of Chriſtians, or for their being *free from the Law*. In all which places, his Meaning is not, (as ſome in Modern times have moſt unreaſonably argued,) that Chriſtians are diſcharged from any part of the Obligation of the *moral* Law, or that the Goſpel-diſpenſation (as ſome Enthuſiaſts have imagined) ſets men *above* the confinements of common Morality: But his plain Meaning, is This only; that by the abolition of *Ceremonies*, we are diſcharged from the *Burden* of the Law; By the *Pardon* declared in Chriſt to Penitents, we are delivered from the *Terrour and Severity* of the Law; and by the Aſſiſtance of his *Grace* we are made, not *free* to *Sin*, but *free* from *Sin*, for the time to come.

Thirdly, If we now *with open face behold the Glory of the Lord, i. e.* underſtand his Will *clearly and diſtinctly*, not in types and ſhadows; then ought we above all things to endeavour to walk as *children of Light*, as becometh thoſe who have ſuch *clear Knowledge* of their Duty, in all Holineſs and righteous Converſation.

Fourthly, If by *this Means* we *are changed into the ſame Image, from Glory to Glory, i. e.* from a Likeneſs with Chriſt here, to a Likeneſs with him hereafter; then ought we always to remember, that by no other way can we arrive at a conformity with Chriſt in *Glory*, but by a conformity with him firſt in *Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*.

Laſtly, If all this be worked in us *as by the Spirit of the Lord*; if all theſe Benefits be the Operation of that One and the ſame Spirit, which always works with us in proportion to our own Endeavours, and will not dwell in a Soul that is polluted with Sin: Then ought we above all things to take heed, leſt by any vicious practice we quench and grieve this good Spirit of God, and drive him from us, and thereby be found to have done deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace.

The End of the Firſt Volume.

6 AU 62